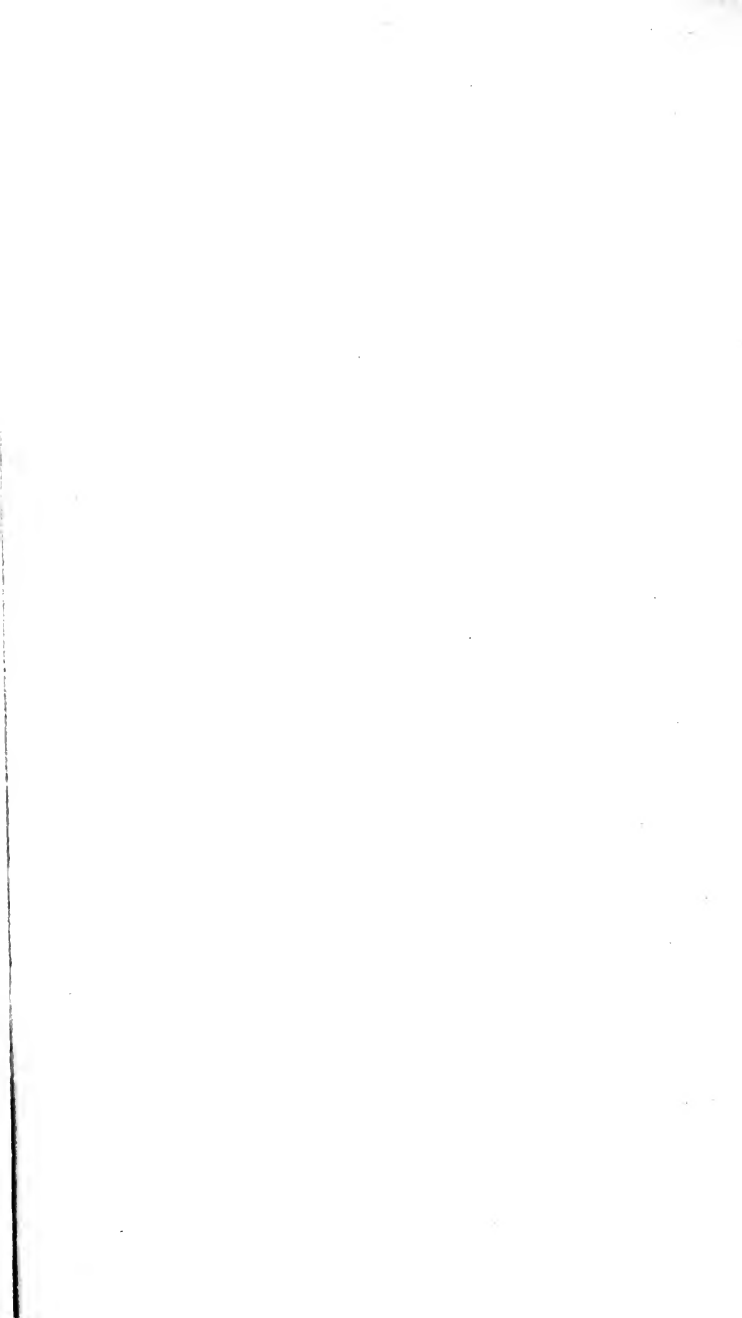


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THE
OLD OAK CHEST.

A TALE OF DOMESTIC LIFE.

BY

G. P. R. JAMES, Esq.

AUTHOR OF

“THE GIPSY,” “THE FORGERY,”
“THE WOODMAN,” &c.

Even-handed justice
Commends the ingredients of our poison'd chalice
To our own lips. Shakespeare.

IN THREE VOLUMES.—VOL. I.

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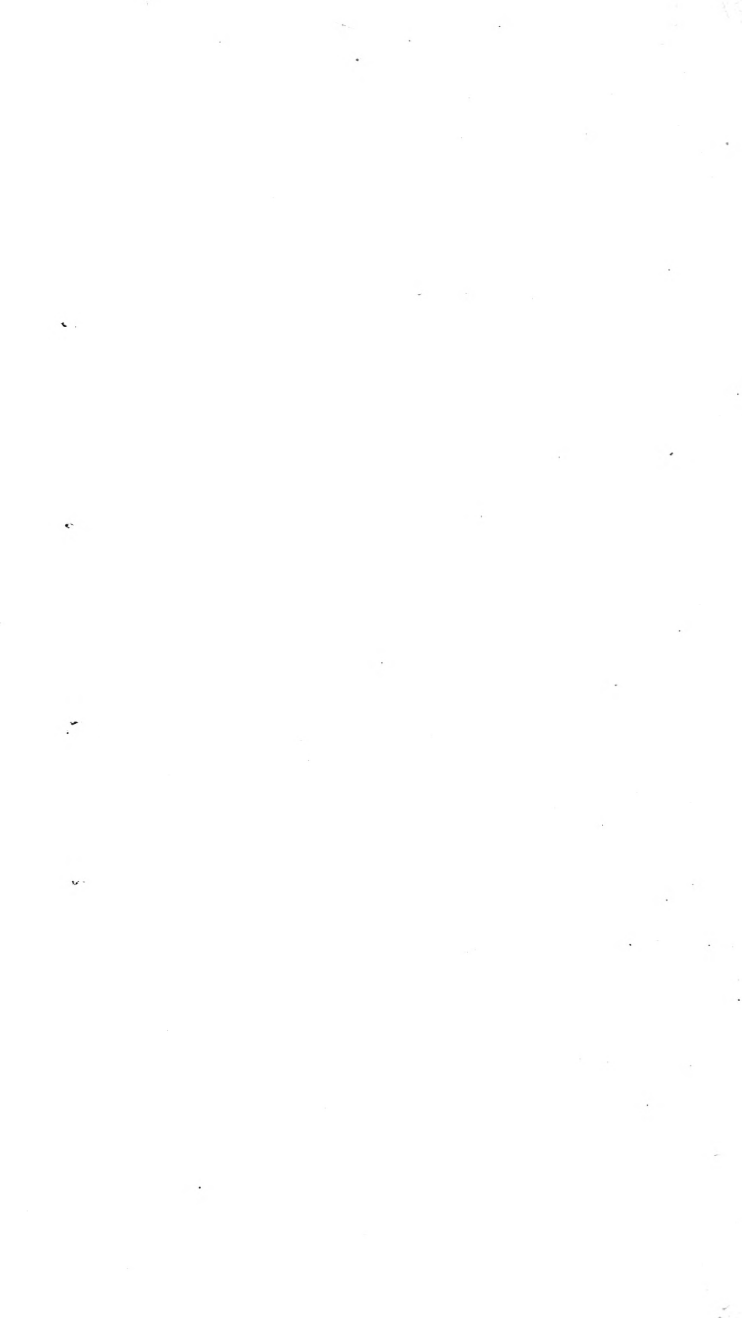
DEDICATION.

TO ONE WHOM I AM PROUD TO CALL MY FRIEND,
A GENTLEMAN IN HEART AS WELL AS
MANNERS,
AN AUTHOR, PURE, VARIED, AND POWERFUL,
A DRAMATIST, KEEN, WITTY, TOUCHING,
EXCELLED BY FEW IN THE PAST,
UNRIVALLED BY ANY IN THE PRESENT TIMES;
A CRITIC, DISCRIMINATING YET GENEROUS,
ACUTE BUT KIND,
WHO HAS ALWAYS HAD GREATER PLEASURE
IN MARKING AN EXCELLENCE THAN IN
DETECTING A FAULT;
WARM-HEARTED, YET DISCREET,
WITH STRONG ENTHUSIASM, BUT STRONGER
JUDGMENT,
A HEART AND MIND EQUALLY CAPACIOUS:

To ROBERT BELL Esq.

THIS WORK IS DEDICATED AS A TESTIMONY
OF SINCERE REGARD

BY THE AUTHOR.



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INTRODUCTION.

WHEN Sir Walter Scott wrote his first great romance, called "Waverley," he added to the title, as has been common in title pages and police reports, what is called an *alias*, saying, "Or, 'Tis sixty years since." The words were very significant even then ; but they imply much more at present. Within the sixty years then just gone past, many vast changes had taken place in the politics, the manners and the customs of the world. The term comprised a great epoch in the history of society. But within the sixty years *now* just past, how much greater has been the change ! I write in 1849, be it remembered ; and if we look back to 1789 we shall find that probably no period of the

world's history affords the record of so many wonderful and important events. I say this with a full knowledge and consideration of man's proneness to exaggerate the importance of all that has taken place in his own day ; and I do not forget the many remarkable events which distinguish particular periods of history from the creation of the world to this very hour : the fall of Rome, Babylon, and Nineveh ; the passing away of a thousand empires ; the gradual decay or sudden subversion of systems and doctrines that we trace with instruction, admiration, or regret.

The Deluge and the Advent stand out alone as things separate and not to be mingled in the consideration of mere worldly matters ; but, excepting reverently those two instances of God's special wrath and God's special mercy, no period of sixty years, that I know of, is so remarkable as the last.

That which is coming may be more so ; for certain it is, that the foundations of all

things have been shaken by that which is just gone ; and we may be, perhaps, as Arnold thought and said—and he was not a man to think or speak lightly—approaching the end of history.

Sixty years ago, the world was just beginning to grow tired of what may be called the metaphysical school of philosophy, to think that facts are better than hypotheses, and that the human mind, unlike the grand Llama of Thibet, may be better employed than in the sole contemplation of its own perfections or imperfections. The material school, the school of the present day, was in fact taking its rise ; though not from the impulse of a physical necessity, which so often directs and controls the efforts of intellect. There was in reality no surplus population in that day. Countries were not overcrowded ; but it seemed as if a prophetic spirit, a warning voice, told men of genius to make provision against the time when that state would be changed, when the means then existing would be

found insufficient for the employment and support of an increasing multitude, and when man's inventive faculties must be taxed to the utmost to extract fresh resources from Nature's teeming bosom. Sixty years ago the famous James Watt was in the midst of his great discoveries. The first application of the steam engine to manufactories had just taken place ; and the world had only then received its first impulse in that career of mechanical invention which has brought the ends of the earth together and well nigh annihilated time and space.

Sixty years ago an ancient dynasty was on the throne of France. Sixty years ago a great revolution was preparing in that country which shook the thrones of the most distant Empires, and, like a mighty earthquake, left the whole frame of society shattered and creviced throughout the world.

Sixty years ago wealth was not the chief title to distinction. Rank, birth, genius,

all obtained respect. Faint memories of feudal and of chivalrous times tinged with a glow, like that of the setting sun, the manners of all classes of society ; and though the peasant might tread upon the kibe of the peer, he took care not to shoulder him into the gutter.

Sixty years ago education, but narrowly diffused, was more distinctive than it is at present. Short and ceremonious were its visits even in palaces and mansions ; and rarely, very rarely, did it penetrate the cottage. Only the more remarkable, however, were the exceptions. The circle within which it acted was limited ; but there its powers were intense. Sixty years ago, as I have said, all the countries of Europe were comparatively thinly peopled ; and in this land of ours especially there was more of homely life and quiet domesticity than is to be found almost anywhere in the great coffee-house of the present.

THE
OLD OAK CHEST.

CHAPTER I.

A BRIGHT, clear Autumn night, with the harvest moon at full, had brought repose to the labourer throughout England. Shocks of wheat were still standing in the field ; so that the merry harvest-home had not begun ; and one might see them on the hill sides, standing in little knots, nodding their heads at each other, and throwing long shadows from the moonlight upon the yellow stubble. Here and there, a patch of late grain upon the colder soils or in the

higher situations, had not yet felt the sickle ; but in most places the rick-yard was full ; and the prospect of abundance cheered the land.

But in those days the good people of England had not been taught by art, or encouraged by factitious inducements, or driven by necessity, to bring under the plough and harrow land that never seemed intended by nature for the production of grain. Forest planting indeed went on at a rapid rate ; and we read of lords and gentlemen receiving gold medals for putting a certain number of acorns into the ground, or raising so many firs or beech-trees.

Nothing of the kind, however, had taken place in the part of the country to which I wish to lead the reader. All the good ground was well cultivated, producing ample crops. A large portion of the second-rate soil was covered with trees ; but they were tall and stately, and of no new planting ; the inferior lands were left very much as nature had made them, though a

picturesque taste in some one long dead, had scattered over waste and common little groups of beeches and firs, which diversified and embellished the scene.

In the midst of one of these commons, of several miles in extent, was a small lake or large pond, computed to be nearly four miles in circuit. It was fed by a little river of remarkably clear water, flowing from the higher ground, and was as irregular in shape as could be well conceived. In one place, a sandy point ran out into the water, as if anxious to reach the land on the other side, and then again, a deep sweeping bay presented itself, with high sandstone banks, which aspired almost to the dignity of cliffs. The extremity towards the west was broad ; and the bank there displayed indications of man's handiwork, in the shape of a high raised bulwark, with a pair of old flood-gates in the midst, to let the water off when it rose too high. But the other end, by which the stream entered, was gradually lost to the

eye, partly by the winding of the shores, and partly by a number of self-sown trees, which had grouped themselves in various pleasant and fantastic shapes, on the richer ground that lay in that direction. Many another spot along the banks, however, was dotted with birch-trees and firs, and in one or two places, a fine old oak was seen, shooting its roots down to the very water of the pond, and waving its branches and green leaves above.

Peeping out from amidst the trees I have mentioned, near the river's mouth, were a thatch, two chimneys, and part of the white walls of a lonely cottage. It seemed a comfortable dwelling enough, roomy, and in good repair ; and at a little distance, where the water was deeper, a boat-house, raised upon piles, protruded over the surface of the pond. Before the cottage swung a sign, having emblazoned, in very glaring colours, a somewhat complicated coat of arms, in which even the monsters of heraldry were made more

monstrous by the skill of the artist who painted it. In one place was a unicorn, which looked exceedingly like a maimed cow, and in another place, a dragon, which might have frightened St. George himself. On the face of the house was an inscription, which I may have to notice hereafter ; but of which it is enough at present to say, that it afforded a general and pressing invitation to all classes of his Gracious Majesty's lieges.

On the left side of this great pond, or lake, as one looked from the embankment towards the narrower end, was a road, which without following all the sinuosities of the bank, kept in general very near to the water, passing under the shadow of several different groups of trees, and then running up the dell by the side of the river. On the right hand and on the left stretched the wide common, now covered in all places with heath in full flower ; and as one pursued the road I have mentioned, which chose by preference the lower ground,

nothing else was to be seen but the sandy hills, tossed about in wild confusion, and covered with a purple coat of bloom, the clear tarn, and the scattered trees.

Such was the aspect of the scene during the day, and in the broad light of the sun ; but now it was night, as I have said ; and the flood of yellow moonlight was over all, when a woman, with a cloak wrapped round her, walked along that road. The stars were swallowed up in the lustre of the planet ; and not a cloud was in the sky. A faint breeze rippled the water, causing it to break here and there into long lines of gold ; and the purple hue of the heath, though no flower could be distinguished, made itself felt through the shadows of the night.

The whole scene was very beautiful even then, solemn, and sweet, and calm ; and the deep, brooding silence, seemed to make the heart listen, as if it were the hour for an angel to speak.

With a wavering and uncertain step, the

wanderer pursued her way. She seemed very young, slight and delicate in form ; and there was something in her air and look, which might make one fancy that she was not fitted or accustomed to wander alone on solitary moors. She carried something in her arms too, partly covered by the cloak ; and once or twice she seemed to pause and press it to her more closely, adjusting the garment round it, and sometimes peeping in to look at it by the light of the moon. Once, when the road approached close to the water, she stood still, turned towards the wide and glittering expanse, and gazed over it earnestly.

What were her feelings at that moment ? I fear they were very painful, but such as many a one has felt, such as some have struggled against, and some have yielded to. There it lay, spread out before her, calm, glittering, cool. It seemed to invite to peace and rest, to offer a refuge for care, and gnawing want, and fierce

anxiety, and fiery passion, and the oppressive load of thought. One step ; and all would be tranquillity within her young and troubled heart. One step ; and the fierce, desolating fight of hope and fear would be at an end for ever.

It was a fiend that spoke ; and she would not listen. She clasped her arms more tightly round the burden that she carried ; and, as if with greater firmness from a victorious struggle, trod on her way with a less wavering step.

The road led her past the cottage I have mentioned ; and she paused and looked up at it, as if with a longing to ask shelter there. But it was all dark ; no sign of light or life within ; and, sitting down on a wooden bench, beneath an elm before the door, she took a few minutes' repose, swaying slowly backwards and forwards, with a rocking sort of motion as she sat. Then again she rose, and pursued the path up the stream, as it ran on chequered with light and shade, some-

times under the full beams of the bright queen of night, sometimes deep in shadow of the overhanging trees.

The way she had to tread was more than a mile-and-a-half from the cottage by the great pond ; and it well might have seemed a weary way. But it did not. It appeared to her marvellously, painfully short. It was not that she knew every step of the path, every tree by the road side, every bank and stone, every turn of the stream, though she *did* know them all with the memory of early youth. It was not that the way was pleasant, and the scene fair ; but it was that she had a task to accomplish, a painful, a terrible task, a task that wrung her heart with anguish, even at the distant contemplation. We all know how fast pain runs to meet us, and how slowly joy approaches.

At length, after the common was left far behind, and the road had run on for nearly half a mile between a bank and the river, there was a gate and a small

turn-stile on the left hand leading to a path through a green meadow. The wanderer took that path and followed it to the other side of the field which was bounded by an ancient stone wall having at the spot where the path ended three flat stones projecting from the wall on either side to give admission to foot passengers into the enclosure beyond.

Carefully and timidly she mounted the steps on one side and descended on the other, and now found herself in a park close by an avenue of trees, up which ran the road she had lately left in order to take the shorter cut across the field. It was not a very widely extended park, nor much varied in its scenery. Hardly a couple of hundred acres would have been found within the walls ; and, except a gentle fall of the ground here and there, the only ornaments the scene possessed were the fine old solemn trees. On the eastern side of the park, at the distance of three or four hundred yards from the wall which formed

a part of the enclosure of the garden, stood a house, to our notions, much too large for the surrounding grounds. It was one of those old stone buildings with projecting wings and centres of which many fine specimens still remain, with flat-topped mullioned windows, many, but small, with broad gravelled terrace before the principal door, separated by a light screen of stonework from the park, steps to descend to the green sward below, and broad steps again to ascend to the entrance hall. Stone vases, filled with large plants, were ranged along the terrace-wall, and a small basin was in the centre, ornamented with a group of statuary.

It was now just half past ten o'clock at night ; and the shadow of the neighbouring trees fell over two thirds of the terrace. Every window on the great front of the house was dark ; but in several rooms of the side on which the wanderer approached were lights, showing that the household was still up. Crossing the avenue and the

green sward of the park after looking long and timidly around, she ascended the steps to the terrace. The sound of her own foot-fall on the gravel startled her ; and then pausing, she stood like a statue for a moment or two pressing the burden that she carried tight to her heart. She bent her head over it ; the moonlight was not upon her ; but the drops were very bright that fell from her eyes.

Hark ! there is the distant sound of a carriage. She runs hastily up the steps to the hall-door ; and, on the broad stone threshold, lays down her burden. Then darting away with a low moan she is lost in the deeper shadow below the terrace.

The sound of the wheels continued ; and soon a large distant bell was heard to ring. It might be that of the lodge at the park gates. All noise then ceased for a moment or two ; and then a carriage rolled slowly up the avenue, large, heavy, cumbrous, according to the fashion of that day, and drawn by four horses. No servants were

behind it, although it was customary to crowd the foot-board upon all occasions of ceremony ; but there were two men in livery, mounted on good stout horses, and furnished, as was neither uncustomary nor unnecessary, with pistols at the saddle bow. On the vehicle rolled up the slope to the terrace and stopped before the steps of the great door. One of the men on horseback gave his rein to the other, and springing to the side of the carriage let down the steps. The sounds, without any ringing of a bell, had brought forth servants from the interior of the house ; and the door was opened showing lights within, just as a gentleman somewhat past the middle age got out of the carriage and slowly mounted the steps.

He was a tall, powerful man, well made in all his proportions and might have seen forty-eight or forty-nine years.

The light elasticity of youth was gone ; and a little gout and some sorrows had made him feel, if not look, older

than he really was. His step then, though firm, was slow ; and there was an air of dignified thought about him which might have given a casual observer a wrong impression of his character. It is not necessary to dwell upon that character here any farther than to remark that, though his general look bespoke calm and even grave meditation and that sort of imperturbable state of mind which generally accompanies a cold and passionless disposition, yet he was in reality by nature impetuous and somewhat hasty in temper.

However, not to rest longer on such matters, he ascended the steps slowly and deliberately, and was entering the house, his foot suspended over the very threshold, when something made him suddenly pause and turn round. It might be that a little faint cry met his ear, or that the servant who had opened the carriage door gave an exclamation of surprise, or that the light which the butler held to show his master the way poured its rays somewhat beyond

the door, and touched upon an object lying on the top step a little to the left. Be this as it may, the gentleman suddenly turned in that direction, and stooping down, raised up with both his hands what seemed to be a small basket.

The unexpected movement of his master called the butler further out with the light ; and he exclaimed aloud the next moment,

“ Good gracious, Sir John, it’s a baby !”

“ It is indeed,” replied the gentleman, in full, soft, clear tones, in which there was more of pity than surprise. “ Who can have placed it here ?”

“ Some hussey or another, I dare say,” answered the butler.

“ We cannot tell, my good friend,” replied his master. “ Who can say what misery, what anguish of heart, has reduced the mother of this child to break through all the tenderest and dearest ties, and leave her offspring to the mercy of strangers ?”

It would seem that the child made some movement ; for the moment after, he added,

“Nay, nay, poor little abandoned one, thou shalt not want a friend—send Mrs. Giles to me.”

“Let me carry it, sir,” said the butler.

“No,” replied the gentleman, “I will take it in myself ;” and, walking into the hall, he turned through a door to the right into a large old wainscoted dining-room hung round with finely painted family portraits.

The butler placed the light upon the table, and went to call the housekeeper as he had been ordered ; but not without casting an inquiring glance at the child and the sort of basket which contained it. The latter, whoever had constructed it, seemed to have been formed upon the pattern of that which once contained the great law-giver of the Jews ; not that it was exactly made of bulrushes, but its principal material was the broad rush or water flag, dried and platted. In shape it was somewhat like a small boat ; and it was lined throughout with very fine flannel.

The child's face, the man could not see, for it was partly hidden by his master's arm, partly by a piece of thin cambric, against the folds of which its little hands seemed to be striving manfully. There was nothing more to be seen but some lace and some small pink ribbons ; and the man hurried his footsteps as much as possible in order to gain a little time to communicate a part at least of the news to Mrs. Giles before any one else.

That stately lady—a personage of not much less than six feet in height tapering upwards from a wide extent of petticoat below to a small head which looked like the knob on the top of an extinguisher—rose up with surprise and some degree of horror at the butler's tale, and hastened to her master revolving as she went the names and positions of various young women in the neighbourhood whose conduct had excited grave suspicions in her mind. When she reached the dining-room she found her master standing beside the table on which

he had laid the cradle and the infant that it contained, and gazing intently upon the now uncovered face of the child who was looking round it with large wide open black eyes as if surprised to find itself there. It uttered no cry, and seemed a fine healthy infant. It was well dressed, too, according to the fashion of that day ; and the appearance of the little rushy cradle, of the small packet of clothes which lay upon the infant's feet, and the fine lawn handkerchief which had been cast over it did not by any means indicate poverty in the parents.

All this, Mrs. Giles gathered at a glance, and was more puzzled than ever ; but she remarked another thing ; which was, that her master held a small white paper packet in his hand, which he seemed to have taken from the cradle ; and she argued thence that the mystery would soon be solved. She wondered indeed that Sir John had not already opened the packet, the seal of which was still unbroken ; and perhaps the slightest possible touch of natural but very

unjust suspicion crossed her mind in consequence of this apparent want of curiosity. She had, however, served her master for more than twenty years; had seen him pass through many pleasant and many painful scenes of life; was in reality a good and charitable woman; knew him well, judged him justly; and the suspicion vanished instantly.

The conversation which followed between herself and her master, need not be recapitulated here; not that it was exactly the same, as that which took place between good Squire Allworthy and Mrs. Deborah Wilkins, under somewhat similar circumstances; for it was much milder in its tone, Mrs. Giles being a person of far superior education to her worthy prototype. Still there was but one thing for a dutiful housekeeper to do under such circumstances: to wonder who could be the parents of the child, to trust that it would bring no scandal upon the family, and to declaim a little on the impropriety of

the whole transaction, which brought it thither.

“It may not be so bad nor so unwise a proceeding as you think, Mrs. Giles,” replied her master, mildly, “though certainly a better course might have been pursued.”

“La! Does your worship know any thing of the circumstances?” exclaimed the housekeeper.

“I think I do,” replied her master, glancing at the packet in his hand.

“But you have not opened it yet, Sir John,” suggested Mrs. Giles, with a fervent desire to see that operation performed.

Sir John did not take the hint, merely replying,

“One may gather much from a knowledge of the handwriting, my good lady. I shall know something more presently. In the mean time, take the poor little thing, and have it well cared for. I really do not know how to proceed in matters I am so little acquainted with. A nurse

must be obtained immediately: but I suppose all the people in the village are asleep by this time?"

"Oh, Sir! Martyr, the blacksmith's wife, lost her baby this morning, poor thing," said the housekeeper; "and I am sure, Sir, if you think fit—"

"That will do very well," said her master, interrupting her. "Somebody must be procured, at all events; and I suppose, the sooner the better. All the arrangements I must trust to you, Mrs. Giles. How sweetly the poor little fellow lies looking at us, as if he understood we are settling matters for his future advantage."

"Lord bless you, Sir John," cried Mrs. Giles, laughing, "it is a little girl. Don't you see the cockade is at the side? Well, I will take care of the poor babe; but for that matter, it could be brought up well enough by hand, for it looks more than three months' old, I think. Only I should

like, if we could find out whose child it is."

Her master smiled good-humouredly.

"You are a very discreet and prudent woman, Mrs. Giles," he answered. "I shall see more in a few minutes ; and if I find it right to communicate the facts to any one, depend upon it, the person chosen shall be yourself. Now take it away to your own room, and see what best can be done for it."

The housekeeper obeyed ; but in passing through the hall she found the butler and a footman, and remarked that the outer door had been left open.

"Dear me, Mr. Lewellyn, why, you have not shut the door," she said ; "and all the night air is coming in. Do tell Peter to shut it, and then come and speak to me in my room."

The footman hastened to obey the injunction, and, while the butler hurried after Mrs. Giles to the housekeeper's room,

closed, locked, and bolted the great outer door. The stream of light, which, while it was open, had poured forth across the terrace and into the park, disappeared. Nothing was left but the moonlight and the deep shadows of the trees ; and then a female figure glided out from behind a tall elm at no great distance from the terrace wall, and took her way back across the avenue and through the meadow at the side of the park.

You might hear her sob as she went.

CHAPTER II.

Now for a chapter from Burke's Peerage and Baronetage.

“Haldimand, Sir John, of Haldistow Hall, County of —— and of Abercwmlyn in the County of Glamorgan, Baronet, born 13th August 17—, married 9th December, 17—to Ellen only daughter of Lord Robert Fitzavon, who died 7th September 17—s: p. Heir presumptive, William Haldimand Esq. of Eastwick. This very ancient family is said to be descended from Henry de Mandé who joined William the Conqueror in England shortly after the battle of Hastings. We find the name variously written in many public documents from that day till the middle of the fourteenth century, when Sir

Walter de Haldimand commanded a party of English troops in Brittainy in support of the famous Countess de Montfort. This Sir Walter left three sons, the eldest of whom, John, after greatly distinguishing himself in the wars of Guienne, returned to the family seat at Haldistow and married Margaret daughter of Sir Francis Audley by whom he left several sons. He was succeeded by his eldest surviving child, likewise named John, who took part with the house of York in the wars of the Roses, and was high sheriff of the county of —— under Edward V. He joined the Earl of Richmond, however, in the succeeding struggle for the crown, and died shortly after the battle of Bosworth field full of years and honours. Never having married, he was succeeded in the property of Haldistow by the eldest son of his second brother Richard, who likewise served the office of high sheriff in the first year of King Henry VIII., and died in extreme old age in the third year of the reign of Queen

Elizabeth, as is stated in an inscription on the superb monument erected to his memory in Haldistow Church by his afflicted widow, the Lady Martha, second daughter to the Earl of Flint. He was succeeded by his grandson John who married Elizabeth, sole heiress of Thomas Lloyd Esqr., by whom the property in Glamorganshire entered into the family of Haldimand. This Sir John was knighted for his services in the expedition against Cadiz, and left two sons, Richard and Charles, and one daughter. The two sons successively inherited the property at Haldistow ; and Sir Charles, of whom very few memorials remain, lived to see the restoration of the house of Stuart and died in the second year after that event. He was succeeded by his only son Walter who remained attached to the cause of the unfortunate James II. till after the defeat of that monarch at the battle of the Boyne. He was created a baronet by King James in the first year of his reign, but narrowly escaped confiscation for his attachment to

the King by the interest of the family of his wife, Mary Ann Churchill, closely allied to the great Duke of Marlborough. He died in the third year of the reign of King William, leaving one son under age. The property of the family greatly increased during a long minority. John, the second baronet, likewise died early, having married Margaret Treherne, a Cornish lady by whom he had issue, John and Francis. He was succeeded by his son John in the year 1712. John, third baronet married in 1739 Mary, fourth daughter of Sir William Grey of Newtown in the County of Northumberland, by whom at his death in 1764 he left issue

“ John, present baronet,
William Grey, and
Richard George.”

These three brothers were all surviving at the time when this tale commences ; and it is with some account of them and

of their history that this genealogical chapter must close. The two elder brothers, John and William, were very nearly of the same age, for only one year and three months had elapsed between the birth of the first and the second. The third was several years younger than either. John from his very birth was of a robust and powerful frame ; and his position gave him great advantages. He was the eldest son, born to the inheritance of the great property of the family, and likely, perhaps, in common with most eldest sons, to be spoiled by the over tenderness of affectionate parents. But there was a great deal that kept him from spoiling. In the first place he was naturally of a bold, frank, impetuous disposition, with warm and permanent affections, and a true and guileless heart. From a very early period of life he showed that love of truth, that abhorrence of falsehood, and that touchstone perception of deceit and affectation in others, which is rather an instinct than

a result of reasoning. In the next place his father was a kind and yet a judicious man, somewhat reserved, but always accessible to his child. Then the birth of the next brother soon took away his mother's inclination to spoil him ; for, in all instances, the baby is the favourite, during some time at least ; and such was the case here for a longer period than is usual. These are all negatives ; but what, it may be asked, was his positive advantage, I mean in the moral sense ? It was that being born the inheritor, and having nothing to look for or to strive for by any slow or intricate process, a free and liberal spirit had full liberty to act in him ; the natural generosity of his nature was not warped or curtailed by circumstance ; and the only restraints which he was called upon to place over his feelings were those of principle and honour. In short, while his natural character, and the circumstances in which he was placed, nullified all the disadvantages which sometimes totally ruin the mind and even the

manners of an elder son, all the many advantages of that position, and they *are* many, were secured to him. He was subject to no debasing influences, and surrounded by all that could elevate. In point of education he followed the usual course of that day, received good instruction under a judicious tutor at home and at a public school, passed some time at a university, giving promise of literary distinction which he never attained, made the grand tour, returned home, fell in love, and married some few years after his father's death. He was as happy as heart could wish ; but his happiness was of very short continuance. The wife whom he loved with deep and devoted affection gave birth to a child which survived but a few hours ; and mother and son were laid in the same grave.

More than twenty years passed, and Sir John Haldimand never married again. The shock he had received coloured the whole of his life with a certain hue of melancholy

which he made no effort to throw off. He lived hospitably, splendidly ; was no enemy to cheerfulness in others ; encouraged all innocent sports, and promoted innocent recreations amongst his poorer neighbours ; was mild to faults and failings, except when affectation, meanness, or deceit, aroused the sarcastic spirit within him : took part in all the usual occupations of a country gentleman of the time, and sought rather than shunned amusement ; but he did not often smile, and rarely if ever laughed. When he did so, however, it was with that clear, merry, joyous peal which showed what a happy heart had been smothered under the ruins of his domestic peace. He was a good landlord, a good master, a good neighbour, and was very much loved and esteemed by all who knew him, except by a small attorney in the neighbouring town, and by one or two foolish county magistrates from whom he occasionally differed in opinion.

It may now be time to turn to his two

brothers. The elder of these, as I have said, was very nearly of the same age as the baronet, but he was a very different man in appearance and disposition. He was at least four inches shorter, slightly and delicately formed, and remarkably handsome in features. Nevertheless, most men thought Sir John the handsomer man of the two. It was the expression that was different ; and there, indeed, the baronet had greatly the advantage.

I know not whether it was the suggestion of some foolish nurse in early years, or whether it was an inspiration of the devil himself, which caused a sort of envy of his elder brother to grow up in the mind of William Haldimand ; but certain it is that from a very early period of life he learned to think it hard that he himself was not the eldest son. This may seem very absurd, but such was nevertheless the case ; and I believe we should find full as much absurdity in our own feelings whenever we are inclined to grumble at any of the dis-

pensations of Providence. True, he did not exactly assert, even in his own mind, that of right he ought to have been the eldest son. That might have been going somewhat too far ; but, however his feelings were cloaked, it is clear he thought it was hard he was not so. He murmured that eldest sons should have any privileges at all over the younger brothers, that John should have the estates and the title, though I very much doubt whether, had he been in John's position, he would have found so much to condemn in the laws of primogeniture ; nor did he, when he found that he himself was to succeed to his mother's property, which was considerable, ever think of dividing it with his younger brother Richard. Moreover, when he became aware that his mother's property was to be his, this did not in the least degree diminish the feelings of envy with which he regarded his elder brother. They grew with his growth and strengthened with his strength ; and he pondered over them

bitterly during many a solitary hour. Being in his youth a very beautiful but very delicate child, he was greatly spoiled by his mother, and by many of the people about him. He was not only indulged, but he was humoured, which is something more. None of his wayward thoughts and feelings were corrected. Though he was taught much, he was educated little ; and the field of his mind, unplanted with good principles, was suffered to produce a large crop of vices.

This is perhaps as much as it is needful to say of his character. His brother John would willingly have loved him ; but the younger brother always wrangled with the elder in boyhood ; and when John, in any of their sports, quietly walked away to avoid the petulance of William, the other would accuse him in his heart of haughty pride.

On the death of their parents, they took their path apart in life ; William

living much in London, mingling in busy scenes, and pursuing the crooked paths of policy and intrigue. There seemed, however, a sort of fatality attending his efforts. None of them were successful, at least to the point at which his ambition aimed. There was something about him, which caused men to mistrust him ; and the acerbity of his nature, rendered more sharp by repeated disappointment, caused him to be disliked, notwithstanding many ingenious efforts to please. He married about the same time as his brother, and bought a property at the farther end of the same county. There was no decided quarrel between the two brothers ; and they frequently met. Nay, more, Mr. William Haldimand somewhat courted Sir John ; for the entail of the Haldistow estate ended with the latter ; and when the wife of the former gave birth to a daughter, William Haldimand asked his brother to act as her godfather. Nevertheless, the birth of that daughter was a

great mortification to the father ; for much depended on his having a son.

If the reader has remarked the genealogical history of the family, he must have perceived that ever since the period at which the Glamorganshire property, the most valuable of their possessions, entered into the family, the whole had descended from male to male ; but the Welsh estates were so settled, that they could not pass to any female branch, reverting always to the nearest male. Now Mr. William Haldimand was an ambitious man ; and his mind was filled with many of those dreams which flit more frequently before the eyes of the unsuccessfully ambitious than of the successful. When he saw his brother's wife and child both expire within a few days of each other, he completely made up his mind that Sir John would never marry again. He knew the strength of his brother's attachments, and perhaps based his expectations upon that knowledge. He saw himself, in imagination,

possessed of all the large estates of the family; and he flattered himself that his skill and abilities could not fail to add a coronet to the bloody hand. He thought to be the founder of a peerage, and to transmit to his children and his children's children, a title of his own winning.

The birth of a daughter, then, was a disappointment to him; he disliked the child, and showed it from the first. He hoped, however, that a son would follow; in that hope he went on from year to year, but was still disappointed; and that disappointment made his unnatural dislike to his daughter but the stronger and the more apparent. He actually treated the child ill; and this was the cause of the first serious quarrel between himself and his brother. Sir John ventured to remonstrate, and received a sharp reply. Much provoked, he answered with a stinging sarcasm, which showed William Haldimand that he was known to the very core, where he little thought it; and he gave way to all the fury of passion.

Sir John ordered his carriage and drove away, resolving to see as little of his brother as possible ; but *his* was not an implacable spirit ; and he would easily have been brought both to forgive and to forget. Such, however, was not the case with his brother. Mr. William Haldimand never forgave : nay, more, he believed not that any one else did so sincerely. It seemed to him, therefore, that the quarrel between his brother and himself must be permanent ; that it was, in fact, a struggle and a strife just begun, but which would only end with their lives. He determined to contest the county with his brother ; and, at the very next election, announced himself as a candidate, upon principles the most opposite to those which his family had always maintained. He had worked underhand for some time before, and entertained good hope of success. In his printed address to the electors, he hypocritically bewailed the unfortunate difference in political opinion which compelled him to oppose his ow

brother, declaring that nothing would have induced him to do so but the solicitation of a great body of electors, and the overpowering weight of the questions involved at the time.

Sir John Haldimand was taken by surprise ; but he acted with wonderful coolness and tranquillity. He gave himself up for one whole day to thought, and then publicly announced his determination not to contest the county with his brother. He guarded himself carefully, however, against the supposition that he approved either of Mr. William Haldimand's proceedings or of his political principles ; announcing that if another candidate started on whom he could rely, he should assuredly give him his vote without the slightest consideration of family connexion.

Another candidate *did* soon appear. The contest was fierce and vehement. Although corruption was not at that time, by a great deal, so generally extended as at present, yet bribes were larger, and

expenses enormous. Mr. William Haldimand staked all upon the cast. He spent all his ready money; he borrowed here and there; he mortgaged his lands; but he was successful for once. He carried the county, and fancied that the position he would attain in Parliament, after such a struggle, and in a moment of great ministerial necessity, would ensure him rewards sufficient to compensate for all that he had expended.

Here, however, he was disappointed, a petition was presented against his return. Ministers were prudent, though not grateful—what ministers ever are?—and they held their hands, till they saw the result of the investigation. Before it was concluded, they were defeated upon two or three important questions, and resigned. Mr. William Haldimand now saw himself well nigh ruined, and without the slightest prospect of attaining the objects of his ambition. Could anything have given him comfort, it would have been the

birth of a son about this time. This was indeed a gratification ; but he had grown morose, irritable, and capricious ; and his conduct towards his daughter, though perhaps somewhat less harsh, was not less unjust and injudicious. She was now a very beautiful girl of some twelve years' old, engaging in her manners, though timid : one that might well have formed a father's happiness. But by her father she was totally neglected. She moved about the house, as if he hardly knew of her existence. He seldom spoke to her, and then almost always sharply. As long as her mother lived, however, she had comfort ; but that comfort was soon to be taken away. Before she was fifteen, her mother was seized with lingering illness, and died at the end of eleven months. Mr. William Haldimand immediately contracted all his expenses, shut up his house in the country, established his abode in London, and became as penurious as he had before been profuse.

But it is now time to turn to the youngest of the three brothers. Richard Haldimand was nearly six years younger than his brother William, and as he succeeded neither to the property of his father nor of his mother, he had been destined by his parents for the church from a very early age ; for there was an exceedingly good living in the gift of the family which had often been made use of as a provision for a younger son. The incumbent was not a very young man when the boy was born ; so that it did not seem likely he would be kept out of the benefice long after he had qualified himself to possess it. Though loved and petted by his father, his mother, and his eldest brother, it seemed that nothing could spoil the gentle amiability of his disposition. He was placable, kind, gentle, good, and obedient. He buckled to his studies for the Church with great zeal and attention, which compensated for some want of ability. But at the period of his father's death, he had not yet taken

orders ; and the good old clergyman, whom he was to succeed, was as hale, as healthy, and as active as ever. His situation for a short time was somewhat painful. The late baronet had left very little besides the entail of estates, and those family goods and chattels which naturally descended to the eldest son. With the exception of these, he bequeathed his whole personal estate to the youngest, probably deceiving himself as to its amount, as many people do. When it came to be calculated by men of business, however, they found that it would not produce more than one hundred per annum : equal perhaps to two of the present day, but still a mere pittance, for one who had been brought up with expensive habits and tastes.

The three brothers were at this time assembled in Haldistow Hall after the funeral ; and two lawyers were also there, arranging the executorial affairs. Richard heard the small amount of his fortune

with great equanimity ; shrugged his shoulders with a quiet smile, and said,

“ Well, I must make it do. I don’t doubt, John, that you will give me the living when it falls in, though, God bless good old Mr. Chantry, I trust we shall not miss his white hair and ruddy face out of the pulpit for many a year.”

William Haldimand turned to the window with a somewhat contemptuous smile, for he had no idea of people wishing another man to live who kept them out of an advantage.

Sir John, however, pressed his youngest brother’s hand, saying,

“ The living is your own, Dick. It was always promised to you, and that ought to be as good as if it were given. My poor father could not know how little you would have, or he would have taken better care of you. Come, and let us have a turn on the terrace.”

When he was gone, the family’s solicitor who was writing at the table, raised his

eyes to Mr. William Haldimand, saying,

“Your brother is quite right, Mr. William. Your father always fancied that the personals were three or four times as much as they really are ; otherwise, he would certainly have provided better for so very amiable and good a young man as Mr. Richard.”

“Tanto buon che val niente !” replied William sneeringly ; and with this truly Italian proverb, Italian in spirit as well as language, he walked out of the room. The lawyer resumed his writing, and, in about a quarter of an hour, was joined by Sir John Haldimand, who sat and talked with him for some time.

Two days after, Richard was to take his departure for Oxford ; but his brother John pressed him earnestly to remain a few days more. William having gone away to London, the eldest and the youngest brother passed their time in calm and quiet occupations, tinged with

some sadness from the memory of their recent loss, but interrupted by no matters of business. The last night of Richard's stay arrived, however ; and just as he was wishing Sir John good night, the baronet drew a parchment-packet from his pocket, and put it into his brother's hands, saying,

“ There, Dick. We must not all be rich, and you poor, my dear boy—there, not a word !”

And taking him kindly by the shoulders, he put him out of the room.

When Richard Haldimand reached his own chamber, opened the parchment, and could make out the meaning of the words it bore, he found that it was a deed settling upon him a thousand a year, chargeable upon the whole Haldistow property, and binding the heirs and executors of his brother as well as Sir John himself. The young man's eyes ran over with tears ; and he invoked a blessing on his brother's head ; but his next words were, “ Now, I can marry Lucy ;” and he *did* marry Lucy.

The marriage, however, did not take place very soon ; for the parents of the lady were wise and prudent people, who, though moderate in their wishes and expectations, judged that it would be better for their future son-in-law to be in possession of the living promised him ere he became the husband of their daughter. This delay was of little importance, seeing that both were very young ; the lady just sixteen, and he not yet of age. So that if man can ever count upon time, they had time before them. If the truth must be spoken, perhaps they doubted the character of Richard Haldimand ; for his gentleness and his tenderness gave to all worldly people an idea of weakness. There was a yielding facility about him in all the ordinary things of life which made many persons believe—and amongst the rest, his brother William—that he had no real stability ; that he was the soft wax, in short, which received its impression from anything near it. Those who so thought, however, did him injustice. He was

kind and gentle and affectionate ; and he had schooled his heart, when he first determined upon embracing the ecclesiastical profession, to look lightly upon the things of this world and attach but little importance to them. But he did this upon principle ; and principle was very strong within him. Any self-sacrifice he was ready to make ; any whim, caprice or desire, he would yield at once for the happiness or gratification of another ; but no principle would he yield on any account, although he strove as far as possible to prevent his resistance from seeming harsh and unbending.

He had nearly five years to wait before the living came into his possession. This was followed by his marriage ; but even then, though he had never cause to regret his choice, his wedded life was not altogether without shade. His two first children, he lost in their birth, and was more grieved than he thought to be right. At length, however, a fine, healthy, hardy boy

was granted him ; and now he would have been perfectly happy, had not those dissensions of which I have already spoken, broken out between his brothers John and William. He tried hard to reconcile them ; and with Sir John he had little or no difficulty ; for though of a very different character from himself, the baronet was not at all of an unforgiving disposition.

“ My dear Dick,” he said, in his rapid and decided way, “ I will see William whenever he likes to seek it. I will be reconciled to him, as you call it. I will never allude to any cause of offence between us, nor act in any other way than I would have acted before our quarrel. But you must not exactly expect me to forget. I will indeed endeavour to think as little as possible of what has occurred ; and as far as all personal offence goes, I can sweep it away as if it had never existed. But there are things not to be so effaced, my dear Dick, lines which, once drawn, can never be obliterated ; I mean my view of William’s

character. Each man in setting out in life is furnished with a painting brush and a pot of colours ; and one of his allotted tasks is to paint his own portrait on the hearts and minds of those with whom he is brought much in contact, in strokes that cannot be erased. William has done so with me. I believe the likeness is a good one ; but at all events there it must remain."

"But he may change," urged Dick. "Time, experience, God's grace, repentance, may work a vast alteration."

"Then he must paint a new picture," replied Sir John, with a smile ; "but," he added, laying his hand affectionately on his brother's arm, "I promise you, my dear brother, that he shall have every opportunity of doing so whenever he chooses to seek it."

With William, however, Richard Haldimand had a much harder task. He would not make the slightest advance ; and, to tell the truth, he was the less disposed to do so because his brother Richard was the

mediator ; for he not only undervalued him and misapprehended him altogether, but he was jealous of him. His constant communication and affectionate intercourse with their elder brother—Sir John's attachment to his little boy, which was very great - - and the frequent and lengthened visits of young Charles Haldimand to his uncle's house, were all sources of annoyance to William, who could not be convinced that his brother Richard was not aiming at objects which he considered of vital importance. He did not venture to say so broadly, indeed ; but he insinuated that such was the case more than once. Richard, however, did not understand him in the least, and went on with his charitable office ; but his efforts proved of no avail. The two brothers were still alienated from each other, and had not met in public or in private for seven or eight years, when, as we have seen, a new tenant was introduced, under somewhat extraordinary circumstances into the house of Sir John Haldimand.

CHAPTER III.

HAVING now given the reader a brief sketch of the history of the Haldimand family, I will take up my tale at the place where I left off.

Sir John Haldimand seated himself in the dining-room, opened the packet in his hand, and read. He was some time about it ; for the packet contained two sheets of paper closely written, and some scraps in a more straggling hand. After he had perused every word, the baronet sat with his head leaning on his hand in profound meditation for about half an hour ; and then rising, he walked into his library in which he usually sat. There he rang the bell for the house-

keeper ; and when Mrs. Giles appeared, he made her shut the door, and also an inner door covered with green baize. This precaution might be against the wind which had a habit of blowing somewhat sharply through the old house ; but it proved very inconvenient to the butler, who could not hear a word of what passed within though his ear was close to the key-hole. He applied that organ first, otherwise he would not have found it necessary to murmur—

“ How quiet they are ! What can Sir John and Mrs. Giles be doing ? ”

The next instant he brought his eye to bear upon the key-hole, and then became convinced that the baize door on the inside was shut, which accounted for no sounds reaching his ear. As nothing could be gained, and something might be lost by remaining where he was, he walked away as soon as he had made this discovery, thinking—

“ I will get it all out of Mrs. Giles afterwards.”

But reckoning without the house-keeper is sometimes as bad as reckoning without the host ; and in this instance Mr. Lewellyn was disappointed. Nothing did he get out of Mrs. Giles. Nor was any other person, though many tried, more successful.

In the meantime, everything had been done that could be done to secure good nourishment, health, and comfort to the little visitor. Mrs. Martyr, the blacksmith's wife, was exceedingly glad of an opportunity of obliging Sir John Haldimand, of increasing her husband's income, and of consoling herself for the loss of her own infant by turning her cares and her affections upon another object. So she took the poor babe to her bosom, and although she wept a little at first when she received it, yet it proved a comfort to her ere many hours were over. Articles of dress were prepared with the utmost dispatch ; and the arrival of the baby was quite a god-send to every industrious finger in the village ; for Sir John was exceed-

ingly liberal in all his arrangements ; and, as the people remarked with a laugh, he could not have dressed the child better had it been his own.

It may easily be imagined that the presence of the little stranger at Haldistow caused a great deal of conversation and not a little scandal, especially as Sir John gave no explanations whatever as to who she was, or whence she came, to any one, if indeed we except Mrs. Giles. Not that I take upon myself to say that he positively *did* inform her ; for the conversation between the baronet and the house-keeper in the library reached no ears but their own. At all events Mrs. Giles assumed great knowledge, looked wise, spoke sententially, and gave many a person a flat contradiction who presumed to insinuate that there was a nearer connexion between the baronet and the baby than merely that of protector and protected. Although Mrs. Giles was much respected in the village of Haldistow and in the neighbourhood, yet

her word would have gone for little or nothing in a case like the present.

“ O, of course, she will stand up for her master,” said one.

“ She is a very discreet woman,” said another. “ Catch her telling tales out of school.”

“ The child is a Haldimand clearly enough,” said a third. “ It has got Sir John’s eyes ; and fine eyes they are too.”

Opinions, however, were somewhat shaken when Sir John Haldimand, the second day after the child’s arrival, brought his brother Dick, and his brother Dick’s wife, to see it at the house of Mrs. Martyr. Now as the reverend gentleman’s notions of morality were very strict, and his fair wife was held in great reverence by every body, people argued that Sir John would never have done such a thing if there had been anything wrong in the child’s advent to Haldistow. Some of the parties held their own opinion, doubtless ; but Mrs. Martyr took care to tell everybody how Mr.

Richard Haldimand had taken the infant kindly in his arms, and put his hand upon it and said, "God bless thee, poor out-cast !" and how, turning to Sir John, he had asked if she had been baptised, and how Sir John replied, "O, yes, Dick. They sent the certificate with her ; and her name is Kate."

Still the news spread, and caused a good deal of commotion ; and whether or not any of the tittle-tattle reached the rector's ears I cannot tell ; but certain it is he took for his text, the next Sunday, one of the commandments of the law which has a reference to not bearing false witness against one's neighbour ; and he expatiated thereon much and at large, turning and twisting his text into every sort of form that it would bear ; now examining it in its narrowest and most limited sense, now expanding it till it comprised every species of slander from false accusation to the utmost limits of gossip. Many a man, and still

more women, went away from the church with their skins a little sore at his castigation of a general vice to which they gave a particular application.

Even nine days is a long life for a wonder ; and by the end of that time the marvelling at little Kate's appearance was well nigh over. The pleasure which it afforded to some, however, was more durable ; and, perhaps, no one was more delighted than young Charles Haldimand, a fine, bold, generous but somewhat wayward boy. Daily would he walk down to the blacksmith's to see the baby ; and often would he accompany his uncle thither. Mrs. Martyr ventured to give him the child into his arms to hold ; and he proved an excellent nurse. He dandled it as if he had had an apprenticeship to the trade ; and then he looked up in his uncle's face, and laughed at his own skill ; then, as if ashamed of his feminine employment, rushed into the forge, and, seizing a sledge hammer, began beating away at a horse-shoe like a

young blacksmith. Sir John remarked all this with a quiet smile, and certainly drew his own inferences of what the future man would be from these small traits in the boy.

After this period, came a very happy season at Haldistow ; but we must touch upon it briefly in order to hurry on to more striking events.

The little foundling throve and prospered under the good care of Mrs. Martyr till she was about twelve months old, and then she was removed to the hall where a regular nursery-maid was provided for her. Two rooms were set apart for her own especial purposes, and as much care and attention bestowed upon her in all ways as if she had been the daughter and sole heiress of the house.

Sir John Haldimand soon reaped the reward of his kindness. He had not shown his interest in the little girl in the way that nurses and grandmothers especially approve. From the time when he had carried

her in her little rush cradle into the dining-room at Haldistow till after she was twelve months of age he had never once taken her in his arms, or dandled her with the usual cries and grimaces by which people attract the attention of young children. If the truth must be told, Sir John doubted his skill in such exercises; and never having had a quiver full of his own, he believed himself incapable of managing the arrows which are said to be so useful in the hands of the giant. It must not be supposed however that he was at all insensible to that inherent loveliness which is in childhood, or to the influence—it seems a kind of magic, or it may be a distant retrospective vision from the earthly paradise, when man walked in perfect innocence—which steals upon the heart (the higher that heart is, the more powerfully,) when we contemplate the opening graces of a sweet and healthy child. There is no object on which man's eyes rest throughout the whole course of his earthly pilgrimage which is

so full of associations as that. It awakens all memories ; it leads us forward into all futurities ; it refers to every linked affection of the human heart.

Sir John had often walked down to the blacksmith's house and gazed upon the face of the child for many minutes, watching it with deep interest and attention ; and as the feeble movements became strong, the dawning intellect brightened, and the first animal instincts showed their development towards reason and affection, one might read upon his pleasant and noble countenance the delight which the contemplation afforded. When the child was removed to Haldistow Hall the pleasure was much heightened. Soon, very soon, she began to run and to prattle ; and many an hour in every day the baronet passed in teaching her little words or leading her by the hand amongst the flowers. Mrs. Giles, the house-keeper, also seemed to have got a new object in life. Though a capital economist and a devoted slave to the duties of her

station, it must be acknowledged that the housekeeper's room and the still room too were frequently neglected to pass an hour in the nursery ; and often good Mrs. Giles has had to sit up far beyond her ordinary bed-time to regulate accounts which had been forgotten or at all events left unarranged while she sported in somewhat starched hilarity with the little Catherine. But never did she breathe a word to any living soul of what she knew, or did not know, regarding the child. The utmost approach to indiscretion that she ever committed occurred one day when, having sent the nurse away upon some errand, she concluded a long romp with the little Kate by catching her in her arms and kissing her, exclaiming, " Bless thee, rose-blossom, thou wilt be heiress of Haldistow one day. I am sure of that !"

Hardly were the words out of her mouth when the nurse re-entered the room ; and they certainly had not escaped her ; for before the next morning a rumour spread

through the servant's hall and reached every domestic in the family that little Kate would be the heiress of Haldistow.

Nor was it alone upon the affections of good Mrs. Giles and Sir John Haldimand that the young visitor seemed to win. The worthy rector never came to his brother's house without asking to see her ; and his good wife was consulted in all the little events of her bringing up. As Mrs. Richard Haldimand had now no nursery of her own, she consoled herself for the loss by frequent visits to the nursery at the Hall ; and during the sicknesses of childhood she showed herself as devoted to little Kate as if the babe had been her own. The very mystery of the child's appearance at Haldistow seemed to afford an additional motive for tenderness ; and far from entertaining the slightest feeling of jealousy towards the little Kate on account of the hold she had obtained upon Sir John Haldimand's affection, Richard and his wife not only shared in his love for

the foundling but rejoiced that their good brother had obtained an object of interest and attachment.

Such, however, were not the feelings of all the baronet's relations. Some distant cousins residing in the county, though they did not venture to interfere in any way, spoke their thoughts very plainly ; and they were wrong thoughts. It is probable that, by this means, the rumours of what was taking place at Haldistow, reached the ears of Mr. William Haldimand, who was now, as I have said, living in London. He was not likely to hear it from any other channel, as, for years, he had held no communication with Sir John, and kept up hardly any correspondence with his brother Richard. He affected to believe, and perhaps *did* believe—for there is no knowing to what length self-deceit will go—that he had been somewhat ill-treated by both. As he could find no true subject of offence he manufactured many, with which it may not be necessary to trouble the reader further

than to say that, perhaps, one letter in the year was all that ever passed between Richard and himself ; and that was always drawn forth from him by an epistle from the clergyman, who did not choose to recognise the existence of any ill-feeling on the part of his brother ; and, though he wrote seldom, continued to write exactly in the same tone and style as if William had not so completely alienated himself.

It seems that Kate had reached the age of four ere Mr. William Haldimand received any intelligence of her existence or of her appearance at Haldistow. The first explosion of his surprise and anger was very vehement ; but he soon curbed his passion ; and, about a week after, the rector received a letter from him, the first which he had volunteered for more than ten years. Strange to say, notwithstanding the irritable and angry state of his mind, it was far more affectionate than any that had been written before ; and as it was short and strongly illustrative of the man's cha-

racter, it may well find insertion here. It was to the following effect :

“ MY DEAR DICK,

“ I have not heard of you or yours for some time ; and I am anxious to know how you are all going on, although my own sorrows and cares which, as doubtless you know, have been very great, have occupied much of my attention—too much, perhaps, for reason and philosophy to justify.

“ I trust you and Mrs. Richard are both quite well, and that your boy Charles, is getting on as you could wish. He must now be growing towards a young man—thirteen or fourteen, if I recollect rightly. What do you intend to do with him ?

“ A piece of intelligence has reached my ears, which I trust, is nothing more than one of the lies of that scandalous jade, Dame Rumour. It is to the following effect :—that our sage and steady brother

John, so severe upon other peoples' faults and failings, has been playing the fool with some woman, and has taken his illegitimate child—I will not give it the proper old English name, as it might shock ears or eyes polite, and I suspect you show all your letters to Mrs. Richard—but has taken this child, I say, to live at Haldistow. The mother may be there also, for aught I know ; for when men once begin such vagaries there is no knowing where they will end. However, I hope, for the credit of the family, that the whole story is false. It goes on to say—but that is too absurd and outrageous to be believed—that John openly declares the child is to be his heiress—for it is a girl, I find—and that he will leave her the Haldistow property. This I cannot give any credence to. That he may show himself a fool, is very possible ; but that he would commit such a gross act of injustice to me and to my son, I will not believe, for that would show him a rogue also.

“Pray let me hear what you know of this affair, for I want my mind set at rest upon the subject ; and believe me, my dear Dick,

“Your ever affectionate brother,

“WILLIAM HALDIMAND.”

This letter pained and mortified the worthy clergyman very much ; for he was one of those, who even in their own minds are fond of throwing a veil over other people's sins ; and he had done his best not to understand the thorough selfishness and malevolence of his brother William's character. He took two or three days to answer the letter lest he should say anything that was severe or cutting ; but, at length, he produced an epistle, of which the following is a copy.

“My dear William,

“I received your letter three days ago ; and I am happy to tell you that

we are all quite well. Charles will be fourteen in September ; and his progress in all respects gives me the highest satisfaction. He is affectionate, kind, and vigorous in mind and body.

“ Our brother John, too, is very well. I can clearly see from your letter that some malicious person has been busily endeavouring to irritate you. John has not been playing the fool in any way that I know of, but has been acting in all things with his usual mixture of good sense and generosity. The little girl, Kate, who is at Haldistow, is not his child at all, but a foundling, who was laid on the steps of the hall four years ago, and found by him and the servants when he came home from the annual county dinner. He is in possession of all the facts regarding the child’s birth ; and the circumstances induced him, after much consideration and conversation with me, to resolve upon educating the poor child as his own, and providing for it. He was quite well aware at the time he took

this resolution of all that a scandalous world might and would say in consequence ; but John is not a man to be turned from acting in a right and proper manner by any such considerations. God forbid that he should be.

“ As to making her the heiress of the Haldistow estate, you have been as much deceived as in regard to the child’s birth. John has never announced any such intention. I must have heard of it, if he had. The property is his own to leave how and where he likes ; and I am sure, he has quite sufficient confidence in me to mention his views to me if he mentioned them to any one. He has never, however, let fall a word upon the subject ; and although I am quite sure that he will provide amply for the poor child he has adopted, I do not think that as yet he has formed any fixed plan for that purpose, or determined either the amount or the nature of the provision.

“ I cannot, my dear William, close this letter without once more urging upon you

the expediency of a reconciliation with John. I believe you have been very much deceived by bad and designing people ; and I grieve to perceive that their suggestions have had the effect of making you take the worst view of everything that our brother does. Had you suffered yourself to enjoy the same opportunities of judging his character that I have had, you would know that he is incapable of anything that is mean, wicked, or unjust. He is all that is kind, generous, and, let me add, forgiving. I pray daily that you may be induced to take advantage of this disposition on his part ; and I know that you would find him ready at once to hold out his hand to you, and forget all that is past.

“ Your affectionate brother,

“ RICHARD HALDIMAND.”

This letter threw William Haldimand into a perfect fury. His first impulse

led him to cast it into the fire. He snatched it out again, however, immediately, and without giving himself time to consider farther, replied to it with the passion still upon him.

“How can you be such a fool, Richard?” he wrote. “You are past forty. You have not been shut up in a monastery all your life. You must have seen something of the world, if it be but the world of your own parish. A foundling laid on the step of his door, forsooth! Poo, poo! Do you suppose men of sense believe such tales? It is clear he has not told you the history of the child, though you say he knows all about it; and there I certainly believe you are quite right. Know all about it? To be sure he does!

“As to his right of disposing of the Haldistow property according to his pleasure, I beg leave to differ from you entirely. Law and right are two very different things, as I think a clergyman might have

comprehended without being told. As to the character of Sir John Haldimand, I beg leave to differ with you as much as upon every other point. Whether he is forgiving or not, I have little to do with. I do not require him to forgive me, there being nothing to forgive ; and I confess myself not quite so placable. He has contrived well nigh to ruin me by starting another candidate for the county against me, when he had not spirit to stand against me himself ; and now you talk about *his* forgiving *me*. I cannot forget things from which I am smarting every day, especially when he seems inclined to add to the obligation, by leaving away from me that which ought to be mine, or my son's, at his death. I have no cause to speak well of his generosity, though doubtless you have, as he settled upon you a thousand a year, besides giving you the living which was intended for you. Those may laugh that win.

“ Yours,

“ WILLIAM HALIDMAND

When the letter was in the post and beyond recall, he heartily wished it had not been written ; but he received no answer to it ; and years rolled on pleasantly and sweetly at Haldistow, though very, very differently in the house of William Haldimand in London.

In the gradual cultivation of a fine intellect, which, not chance, but Providence had assigned to him to rear and to direct—in watching the development of a thousand beauties and graces, Sir John Haldimand passed easily and lightly from middle life towards old age. At forty-eight, eighteen years makes a great difference. It is the period of loss and decay. Acquisition, fruition is past, the spring and the summer gone, the morning and the noon over ; and all that remains for most men is the fading twilight, the dark season, the coming winter. Sir John Haldimand, however, seemed to feel the touch of time very little. His hair became white indeed ; and a line or two of thought gathered upon

his brow ; but his step was not less elastic, his figure as upright, his teeth as fine, his eyes as bright and clear as ever. A fine, high heart is a wonderful preservative ; and that he possessed, if ever man did ; but it is not improbable that the presence of Catherine, who was now by universal consent called Catherine Haldimand, had aided to keep him in that perfect state of health, which had not known interruption for an hour since she was laid upon the step of his door. It weaned him from memories that were painful ; it gave him an object of interest and affection ; it supplied him with motives for sweet and pleasant thought ; it afforded him those occupations which expand the heart and elevate the mind. She was a treasure to him, and knowing no other father, she loved him with all a daughter's love.

I will not pause to describe Catherine herself. Suffice it, that she grew up exceedingly beautiful, and from a very early period, displayed that grace which is more

than beauty. Her mind had been richly cultivated ; but her heart had been educated too ; and both were well worth the care.

The rectory still contained Mr. and Mrs. Richard Haldimand ; but their son was now very seldom there. He had been sent to Eton, and had then shown a strong inclination for the army. His father had a great distaste for that profession, and could little comprehend how Charles could choose it. He resisted for some time ; and the young man submitted with dutiful patience ; but he grew somewhat grave and sad, and, when questioned, acknowledged that his wishes were unchanged, although he was willing to submit entirely to his father's will. Sir John, however, now interfered, and persuaded his brother to yield to so strong and permanent an inclination. A commission was easily procured, all arrangements made, and Charles Haldimand soon justified the course which had been pursued towards him, by distinguishing him-

self greatly in the wars which then convulsed Europe.

So much for Haldistow. We shall by-and-bye give a glance at the house of Mr. William Haldimand in London. Ambition, as I have before shown, had by this time given way to avarice. He began by careful saving to regain only the money which he had squandered away ; but when this object was accomplished, the habit had become a passion ; and although he did not present the appearance, or live exactly the life, of a miser yet there was a meanness, a grasping, a penury unsuitable to his station and his means. He was called upon for no great expense indeed for some years ; for his family was now by one circumstance or another reduced to himself and one son.

CHAPTER IV.

EIGHTEEN years of improvement had not passed over the thatch of the Haldimand Arms in vain. There still stood the cottage, which we once pointed out to the reader, on the same spot at the head of the little lake which was commonly called, in the country, Haldistow Mere; and its windows looked all down the water, affording a view of the headlands and banks and sandy points to the very end. A slight change had taken place, however, not only in the outward appearance of the cottage, but even in the very face of nature. Formerly the Haldimand Arms consisted but of a long parallelogram of two floors, with plain whitewashed walls and a very rude

and somewhat dilapidated thatch. Now, a little projecting wing had been joined to each side, adding no less than four very good rooms to the interior accommodation of the house. But that was not all. Advantage had been taken of the opportunity afforded by the building of these two little wings to re-thatch the whole dwelling; and, as the changes were made at the expense of Sir John Haldimand, who was a very liberal landlord, the builder thought he might as well suggest that it would add greatly to the beauty of the house and to the comfort of the inhabitants, if a little rustic verandah was run along the front from one wing to the other. Sir John Haldimand went down and looked at the building; and the verandah was ordered.

These improvements suggested others; a new spirit seemed to seize upon the tenant. He planted, at the foot of each post of the verandah, the most beautiful and the most durable creeping plants he could find; one thing led him on to another; the ground

in front of the house was smoothed and turfed; he turned the road to the back with his own hands, fenced in, with his landlord's permission, the space between the cottage and the water's edge, laid it out as a garden, and decorated it with evergreens and flowers.

So much for the house and its site; but now for the change which had taken place in the scene. That change was not very important; but it had a great effect upon the picturesque beauty of the place. The stream, which was about seven or eight yards broad, or perhaps a little more, had, at the time when this tale began, been deep and rapid at the spot where it flowed into the Mere, but smooth and glassy. As it came from the higher lands, however, the descent between the lake and its sources was very considerable; and advantage had been taken of this circumstance to build a mill about four miles higher up, where a strong and very serviceable fall of water was obtained of more than twenty feet in depth.

The miller, who was a very greedy personage, not content with one fall, had by erecting strong dams brought a large stream from the river round to the other side of his house, and established a second wheel on that side also, quite separate from, and independent of, the first. He had thus made a sort of island of the ground on which the mill stood; and as he had some meadows lying to the left, the body of water which he had separated from the main stream was led through these meadows after turning the wheel, and joined the river again at a considerable distance farther down.

The great storm, however, of November 17 ———, overturned all these comfortable arrangements. The tremendous fall of rain, and the hurricane with which it was accompanied, swept, with peculiar violence, over that part of the country. Multitudes of houses were unroofed, chimneys, and even spires of churches blown down; and in short, it seemed as if a great broom had been

sent over the land to sweep away every thing that was rickety and unstable. Now the miller though he had undoubtedly done much to effect improvements which might bring in money, had done nothing to secure the comfort of himself and his family. The mill itself, in an elevated situation, had received no repairs except in its machinery, for many years ; and in the morning after the storm, not a vestige of it remained except the stone foundations. The miller, his wife and daughter, had escaped in time ; but everything the mill contained had been swept into the river. Nor was this all. Dams, dykes and troughs, had been carried away together by the immense pressure of the water which came down from above. The whole meadows round presented the appearance of a lake ; and when the flood subsided, it was found that the stream thought it best to pursue the course which the miller had cut for a part of its water, and abandoning its old bed which had become encumbered by a

vast quantity of *debris*, to wind along in a smooth and quiet manner, through the fields to the left. The flood, the wind, and, it was affirmed, a slight shock of an earthquake, had shaken and undermined a large sandstone bank on the left side of the stream near its mouth ; the new course which the water had taken affected it also ; and, after remaining with great fissures, apparent in various places throughout a long and hard winter, the very first thaw saw many thousand tons fall over right athwart the stream.

These things happened in the night ; and all that the good man of the Haldimand Arms heard of the event till the next morning, was a loud report, which he took to be a tremendous clap of thunder. When he went forth the next day, however, he found the character of the river completely changed. Instead of a calm and tranquil line of deep flowing water, it was a torrent rushing for some way in violent rapids amongst large masses of rock, and then

plunging over the stony barrier that strove to obstruct it in a white and sparkling fall of about nine feet. The road, too, was injured and obstructed by the fall of a bank on the other side, and the trees which had covered it ; but that was soon remedied ; and when the landlord of the Haldimand Arms looked at the glistening cascade and the deep tumbling pool at its foot, he rubbed his hands and said, with a look of satisfaction :

“ Capital fishing there, by-and-by.”

Now, the landlord of the Haldimand Arms did not thus rejoice without cause ; for the inscription on the front of his house was different from that which might be seen on most public houses ; and in addition to the usual offer of accommodating men and horses, it stated that tickets of leave to fish in Haldistow Mere were to be procured within, and that parties were provided with all the requisites for carrying on the war against the finny tribe.

To say the truth, the good landlord's

guests consisted almost altogether of amateur fishermen ; and he himself bore the honorable office of fisherman and game-keeper on the moor to Sir John Haldimand, for whose exclusive amusement, part of the lake was reserved. The office had been bestowed upon him by the baronet when he was quite a youth, and for a reason which has procured office for many another man, namely, that those interested in him did not know what else to do with him. He was the son of an old servant of the Haldimand family, and had been an odd boy, an odd lad, and an odd young man. Some thought he was a genius, some thought he was a fool ; and certain it is he read a great deal of very strange matter in his youth, all of which seemed to sink in upon his mind as upon blotting-paper, producing vague and indistinct impressions which sometimes came to light again in very strange ways. Twice before he was twenty years of age he was brought up for poaching ; and in verity his

gun or his fishing rod was seldom out of his hand ; but he fully convinced Sir John Haldimand that the head and front of his offence, was the shooting of any strange birds or beasts that he might see for the purpose of stuffing them afterwards ; and, as his mother had often pressed for some employment for him, Sir John made him a game-keeper to prevent the other game-keepers from meddling with him.

He lived for three years in the little cottage by the Mere before it ever entered into his imagination to make a public house of it ; but many people came to ask for permission to fish during that time, and were sent up to the great house to obtain it. The good-humoured baronet took into consideration this great additional labour, and bestowed upon the keeper the privilege of granting permission, only adding an injunction to see that the visitors fished fair. Many of them wanted bread and cheese and a draught of ale, which could not be supplied without sending three miles ; and

it suddenly struck Tom, as a bright idea, that it might be as well to supply them with ale himself. Sir John made no objection ; and the Haldimand Arms was established. Then a bed-room was added for such gentlemen as wanted more than one day's fishing, and then the two wings ; till at length the place assumed the appearance I have described with its neat little garden, turfed and gravel-walked, and ever-greened and flowered, running down quite into the Mere, the picturesque boat-house at a little distance on the right, and the river coming tumbling over its cascade at the distance of some quarter of a mile on the left.

It was to this scene about the 14th., or 15th. of April 17— that a man, who seemed in the middle of all things, rode up, towards the evening, on a stout, handsome bay gelding. He was about the middle height, and of about the middle age, and seemed to be of the middle class of society. Some persons fancy they can distinguish a gentle-

man by his hat, some, by his gloves, and some, by his boots ; and all these articles on the stranger's person were very middling. His hat had seen some service ; his boots, though perfectly whole, were neither new nor fashionable in shape ; and his gloves of thick doeskin with the seams on the outside had evidently been cleaned many a time and oft. He wore a sort of sporting jacket with wide flaps, and pockets large and many ; and round his neck was wrapped a cravat which would have made any ten of modern days. He rode exceedingly well however, and was altogether a good looking man of forty-three or forty-four years of age. It would appear that he was an expected guest ; for the landlord himself came out to meet him followed by a boy with shoes but no stockings, to take the traveller's horse.

“ Well, Tom,” said the new comer, addressing the landlord by his christian name, “ you have got ready for me, I suppose.”

Mr. Thomas Notbeame, for such was the

fisherman-landlord's name, nodded his head.

The stranger was evidently acquainted with his ways, and required no other reply.

"Have my trunks come by the waggon yet?" asked the visitor.

Tom Notbeame shook his head.

"That is very unfortunate," said the stranger. "What can be the meaning of that?"

Tom answered nothing; but a female voice from an open window on the ground floor exclaimed,

"Lord, master, why don't you tell the gentleman that the carrier comes later now than he did last year?" and an antiquated maid-servant stepping forth, added, with a curtsy—"They'll be here safe enough, Mr. Greenshield; but I dare say 'twill be an hour first. The carrier comes quite regular, Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays; and as he has got a new blunderbuss that holds I don't know how many bullets, he'

not like to be stopped again as he was last spring. Everything is quite ready in your room, sir ; and I've made up a bit of fire 'cause the evenings is cold. 'Tis that what makes master so foolish and grim-like. He won't speak a word to-night, I'll answer for it, till the shutters is up. Then may be he'll talk more than one wants."

This was all said in the immediate presence of her master whom she seemed to suppose deprived of hearing, as well as of speech, for the time being ; and certainly he took not the slightest notice of her unceremonious account of himself, but, turning on his heel with his hands in his pockets, walked quietly to the end of the garden and gazed up and down the Mere. Mr. Greenshield in the mean time entered the house, proceeded to the bed-room where he had lodged a year before, unloaded his pockets of a great number of different articles, and then, having given some orders in reference to supper, followed the landlord down to the end of the garden.

“Why, what is the meaning of this, Tom?” he said, with an exclamation of surprise, as he looked up the water and saw the changed appearance of the river. “Why, you have been manufacturing a cascade.”

“Ha!” said Tom Notbeame, with a look of some satisfaction; but he gave no explanation; and the stranger proceeded to put some other questions to him, to which he received as copious replies.

Two or three minutes after, something on the opposite side of the lake seemed not only to catch his attention but to rouse him in an instant from his silent fit. “On my life and soul there’s a bus-tard,” he cried, “the first I’ve seen these five year. There, don’t you see, don’t you see, running along upon the ridge of sand agin the light? Jack, Jack, bring out my gun. I’ll have him. I know where he’ll go.”

The boy to whom he called was all eagerness in a moment; gun, shot-pouch and

powder-flask were brought out ; and running down to the boat-house followed by the boy, Tom pushed off and went skimming across the water to the other shore. In the meantime the visiter looked after him with a smile, saying, "Thou art a strange creature, but a good one, I believe."

He then turned and re-entered the house. Not long after, the carrier arrived with his luggage which consisted of two long boxes of a somewhat un-English shape. In the disposal of the articles which these contained, Mr. Greenshield passed about three quarters of an hour, towards the middle of which time he heard the report of a gun.

He next descended to the public sitting-room of the house, a neat, clean parlour with a sanded floor, in which he found a cloth and a knife and fork laid for his supper. The meal itself soon followed, and in the midst thereof there was a little bustle and calling about in the house, after which the parlour was invaded by Tom

Notbeame and his boy Jack. The former carried an enormous fowl in his hand which he held up in the stranger's sight with a look of triumph, but without saying a word ; and his guest exclaimed, " A beautiful bustard indeed, Tom ! I should like to have that fellow roasted for my dinner to-morrow."

" Likely," answered Tom ; " but you wont ;" and then he added with a sort of convulsive burst as if he forced himself to speak against his will, " No, no, this is for Sir John ; and let who will want it, they shan't have it."

Mr. Greenshield laughed good-humouredly, saying—

" Well, well, I must content myself with a barn-door fowl then." The next instant another personage entered the room, seemingly a traveller of the lower orders. He was a tall, thin man, of about forty, somewhat sallow in complexion, and with very keen black eyes, which he fixed sharply upon every one in the room for a single instant,

and then withdrew them again. Mr. Greenshield's brow knit a little as if he did not like the man's impertinent stare ; and the landlord looked at the intruder without speaking, but with not a very placable countenance.

"Well, what do you want here?" he asked as soon as he could bring himself to speak. "Why don't you stay in the tap?"

"Because I'm going on to Haldistow, Master Notbeame," replied the other ; "and I want to know what is to pay. I have had some bread and cheese and a pint of ale."

"Nothing," answered the landlord. "Take it and welcome. You shan't pay in my house the first thing you do after you come back."

The stranger nodded his head and departed ; and Mr. Greenshield looking up, asked—

"Who is that, Tom?"

"A great rogue," replied Tom Notbeame,

“and one who has spent twenty years in Lunnun, sharpening his roguery, or I’m mistaken,”

Mr. Greenshield perceived that Tom’s taciturnity was breaking down ; and, putting away his knife and fork, he said—

“Come, my good friend, let us have a glass of wine together. It is growing dark. We’ll have the window shut, and the candles lighted, and a bottle of your best port.”

The reader may think it rather strange that Mr. Greenshield should ask his landlord to drink wine with him ; but, if he can carry his mind so far back, he will recollect that such a custom was not at all uncommon in the simpler and less fastidious times of our ancestors. Besides, Mr. Greenshield really enjoyed a chat with his present landlord, when it could be obtained ; for his mind was stored, as I have hinted, with a great many odd scraps of information, mingled with strange notions and queer conceits, which often, at the close of

one of his silent fits, were poured forth in a very amusing manner.

In days of yore, there were old ladies who passed a great part of their time in fabricating quilts of many colors and strange patterns. These ladies had usually a large bag containing shreds of silks and cotton, and all sorts of stuffs, of every hue in the rainbow, and a great many besides. This was called their patch-bag; and when they wanted a piece of any particular colour to fit into the figure they were producing in their patch-work, they would shake out the whole contents and display a most extraordinary collection of those things which Hamlet supposed to enter into the composition of his stepfather when he called him a "king of shreds and patches." This bag affords the best possible idea that I can furnish of Tom Notbeame's mind; and its turning out, of his conversation.

But before we dwell upon what passed after this, a word or two must be said upon

the personage who had just left the inn to go on to Haldistow.

Were such a thing possible as to go back again upon the high road of Time, and could the reader trace the steps of that personage along the course of the last four days, he would suddenly come upon a scene which shall be described in the succeeding chapter.

CHAPTER V.

IN a small house in one of the most fashionable parts of London, with everything about him in very neat and orderly condition, sat an elderly, or rather an old, man, in a tall-backed arm-chair. He looked, at least, five or six years older than Sir John Haldimand, although the snowy whiteness of his hair was concealed by the powder with which it was filled ; and much pains had been bestowed upon his dress. His lean and shrivelled figure—his sunken cheek and wrinkled brow—the coarse and heavy-formed ear, and the dry, large-jointed hand, all spoke of age. He did not seem feeble, it is true : he was not

bent ; and his eye was clear, bright and piercing, with a certain greedy, keen expression, that was very disagreeable. He wore spectacles, indeed, yet he could read and write very well without them ; and he used them more frequently when he was conversing with others, especially upon matters of business, than when he was occupied with matters which seemed to require more eyesight. It was a common jest at Court, that he wore spectacles to look into other peoples' eyes and to hide his own.

This was William Haldimand, the younger brother of Sir John ; he who had once been the beautiful and petted boy, jealous of his brother's elder birth ; and such had he become at the end of little more than sixty years of passions, schemes, disappointments, and successes.

On the present occasion he was not alone ; for the man we have shown looking into the inn parlour now stood before him ; and Mr. William Haldimand was gazing

at him through his spectacles. There was a slight look of alarm on the man's countenance ; for it was unusual for his master to call for him at that hour ; and it was not pleasant to him to be taken by surprise at any time. It was very near a minute before Mr. Haldimand spoke ; and when he did, his words were not very reassuring ; but the man by that time had recovered all his self-possession and cool impudence.

“You are a great scoundrel, Matthew,” said his master, in a cool, deliberate tone, without ever taking his eyes off his face ; “you are a great scoundrel ; and you know it.”

The man bowed low, but answered not a word ; and Mr. Haldimand proceeded in the same quiet manner—

“Ten years ago,” he said, “you stole two guineas off my table—there, don't deny it. I know all about it as well as you do, and have always known it. Then three years ago you swindled me about

the price of the horse you bought at Hackney. You got seventy pounds from me for him ; and you only paid the man fifty. The real price of the horse was forty-five ; but you gave him five more to make him hold his tongue and sign the receipt. He nevertheless told all about it when I brought him before a magistrate ; and I have got his declaration properly signed and witnessed. I saved you then, or you would have gone to Botany Bay."

"I am very grateful, sir," replied the man, when he heard his master pause ; but Mr. Haldimand instantly stopped him.

"Pooh, pooh," he said, "not grateful at all, nor any need of gratitude. I saved you because I wanted you. But, my good friend, there must be a limit to such things. You made a great mistake when you took the diamond ring that I left upon the washing stand at my house in Richmond, and a *very* great mistake in taking it yourself to pledge at a pawnbroker's, in my olive-green suit."

The man turned deadly pale ; for, whether from imagination or not I cannot tell, but his cravat seemed to press very tight round his neck with a cord-like, ropy sensation, which was not at all pleasant in its associations. His lips moved, however, as if he were going to try a bold denial ; but his master again cut him short.

“ Not a word, Matthew,” he said, “ or you’ll force me to hang you. The case is quite complete against you. The pawnbroker was brought this morning, saw you through the window of my dressing-room, and is ready to swear to you. The ring I have here.”

And he produced it.

The man’s teeth chattered a little in his head ; but still there was some consolation to be extracted from his master’s words. They were vague indeed ; and he longed for an explanation ; but they did not show a disposition actually to hang him ; and, knowing that Mr. Haldimand had generally his own particular objects, he asked himself internally,

“What is to be the equivalent?”

Still his master gazed at him through his spectacles, marking with a very practised eye, and with a thorough knowledge of the man himself, those traces of emotion which the other could not fully conceal. He wished to alarm him, but not too much. All that was necessary to his purpose, was to show the servant that his life was completely in his master's power ; and that object, he saw, was attained. He therefore, as was sometimes his wont, began a disquisition, seemingly foreign to the subject, in order to let the man come fully to his senses after the fright he had received.

“You talked of gratitude just now, Matthew,” he said. “I wonder that a shrewd man like yourself should speak such nonsense, especially to me. Gratitude is all trash. It is one of those mere names, which people use instead of ideas. Nobody is grateful in reality. All is traffic in this world. One man serves another,

because he expects another man to serve *him* ; and the other is grateful, as you call it, simply by way of exchange, that they may carry on their trade in services like any other two merchants. He is a foolish fellow, however, who sells anything, without either getting money down or a bill of exchange for the amount. Now I have taken your bill, Matthew, very often, and cannot say that you have paid it regularly. I must now have money down."

The man seemed to comprehend him entirely ; and the footing of equality, on which his master put their dealings, was a very comfortable encouragement to no inconsiderable growth of native impudence. He lifted his hand to his head, and rubbed his temple with his finger, saying,

" In what coin, sir ? I am afraid I have not much ready cash at command."

" I will tell you," said Mr. Halkinand in a musing tone. " You see in the first place, my good friend, you will have to quit London immediately, for this business

with the pawnbroker is likely, before the day is out, to bring visitors to the house who had better find you not at home."

"I am ready to go this instant, sir," said the man looking towards the door.

"Stay, stay, no such hurry," said Mr. Haldimand with a cynical smile at the man's terror. "I will insure you for the next six hours. You must consider first where you will go; and I think no place could be better than Haldistow. I took you thence a good deal more than twenty years ago, because you seemed a sharp and serviceable boy. I had you taught to read and write, and dress hair, and cypher; and I believe you have acquired one or two foreign languages in my service. Now with all these accomplishments I wish to send you back."

"But, sir—" said the servant.

Mr. Haldimand, however, cut him short, waving his hand.

"I know what you would say," he exclaimed: "that it will be terribly painful

to you to quit the service of so good a master, and all that. Moreover, that people may think of looking for you at Haldistow ; but make your mind easy on both points. You shall still remain in my service at Haldistow as well as in London ; and in regard to the constables, you must know I have not given information yet. The pawnbroker, I think I can keep from doing so, by paying him the value of the ring, which I have promised to do, unless I return it and prosecute. But even supposing the worst, that he should be indiscreet, and that those active gentlemen at Bow-street should make some enquiries, good master pawnbroker has no knowledge whatever of what you are or whence you came. I showed him a somewhat smart and foppish-looking man through the window of my dressing-room ; but he does not know who that man is, nor anything about him.—The best thing you can do is to go down to Haldistow.”

“And what am I to do there, sir ?” asked the man, somewhat comforted.

“ You must endeavour,” replied Mr. William Haldimand, “ to enter into the service of my brother John—without quitting *my* service, you understand. His old butler, Lewellyn, is just dead ; and he is looking for another. I will give such a letter in your favour to my brother Richard, as I think will secure you the place.”

“ Shall I wait for the letter, sir ?” asked Matthew in an insinuating tone.

“ No, my good friend, no,” replied Mr. Haldimand, with a quiet but significant nod of the head. “ I will send the letter by post. I cannot venture to give a certificate of good conduct into your own hands, while my memory is encumbered with two or three unpleasant little facts. That might be considered as compounding felony, you know, Matthew. I will *send* the letter, my good friend. When you get to Haldistow, call upon Mr. Richard, and tell him that you left me because you thought you should die in London if you stayed. That is true, you know ; and

your sallow face will very well bear out the tale. You will find that I have written to him ; and I think the plan will take effect."

" I am sure, sir, I am deeply indebted to you," answered the excellent Matthew, " and wish I knew how I could ever repay you ; but I do not understand how I am to be your servant, and Sir John's butler too. Am I to take wages from both ?"

Mr. William Haldimand looked sharp and stern. Some very mingled feelings might be under that look. In the first place, he did not at all like to pay the man wages and yet lose his services in his house. He had, nevertheless, upon full consideration, determined to do it, for he believed it to be necessary to give him a bribe of some kind to ensure a stronger hold upon him than that which he already possessed ; but he did not like the idea of parting with his money when it came to the point. In the next place it is always disagreeable for a man who has a sinister

object in view, to be compelled to give explanations. Explanations are very unpleasant things in such circumstances ; and Mr. William Haldimand was angry that the man did not help him in any degree, but seemed to be perfectly stolid, which his master knew right well he was not by nature. He smoothed himself down, however, and replied :

“ Yes, you are to take wages from both ; and I will soon show you how you can repay me, and how you can serve me, and yet be my brother’s butler.”

He paused for a moment or two, to consider every word he was going to use, and then proceeded thus :

“ You know that Sir John Haldimand and I have not been upon terms for some years ; but perhaps you are not aware that after our serious quarrel he took an illegitimate daughter of his into the house, pretending that she was a foundling.”

“ I have heard something about it, sir,” said the man. “ She was nursed by my aunt Martyr.”

“For which I am in no way obliged to your aunt Martyr,” replied his master sharply. “However, this child Sir John has reared up in every respect as his daughter. She has had the most accomplished and expensive teachers. She is introduced into every society as Miss Haldimand; and I understand—at least it is generally reported—that Sir John intends to leave her the Haldistow property, quite contrary to right and justice, although perhaps he may have the law on his side. My brother Dick pretends that it is no such thing. Now, Matthew, I want to know the truth of this matter—I want to assure myself whether it be really my brother’s intention to sever the Haldistow property, which has been so many centuries in the family, from the name of Haldimand, and convey it, with the hand of his natural daughter, to some other race. Dick, the parson, is such a good-humoured fool that there is no relying upon his reports; but you are shrewd, keen, observant, not very scrupulous, and would not think it any great sin or shame to go a little out

of the way to serve a master who has benefitted you, and—" he added the latter words in a low tone—"and who has your life in his power."

"Certainly not, sir," replied the man. "Now I understand all about it. You wish me by hook or by crook to find out whether Sir John has made a will, and what sort of a will he has made—I'll do it."

His master smiled, well pleased. The great difficulty was over.

"That is the first object," he replied. "I may have one or two other things for you to do down there; but all that can be arranged afterwards, as they are matters of smaller moment. However, we must arrange how our correspondence—"

At that moment the door opened, and in walked a young man somewhere between twenty and thirty—he might be nearer to the latter period—dressed in the most extravagant height of the fashion, with an effeminate look, and the step of a dancing-master.

“ Ah, my beloved papa,” he exclaimed, “ I knew not that you were holding secret counsel with your honest and sapient minister, worthy Master Matthew Hush ; but I must just trouble you to sign me a cheque for a little money. I am infinitely poorer than any ecclesiastical mouse that went without pockets for the lack of something to put into them ; and I have a very pressing necessity at this moment for five hundred pounds.”

“ I am sorry to hear it, Henry,” replied his father drily ; “ for I have not the most remote notion where you will get it. Certainly not from me.”

“ Well, in that case I must apply to Judas Iscariot,” said the young man lightly. “ Pray how old are you, my dear dad ? that we may draw the post-obits with some sort of decency.”

“ I think all sort of decency has left you, Harry,” answered his father, sternly.

“ By no manner of means,” answered the young man. “ I am the most decent

personage in town. Nobody can say they ever saw me in dirty linen, with my nails foul, or my hands unwashed. Why, I am the sole support of the reputation of the family, the prop and pillar of the house of Haldimand ; and if my father will not give me a pitiful five hundred pounds to meet my necessities, I must have recourse to the usual means and appliances whereby other men of figure remedy the ill will of fortune or the sternness of their paternal Brutuses. Nay, my dear father, pray do not frown. The age of Catoism is passed away ; and not a vestige of the old Roman survived the introduction of hair-powder, snuff, and umbrellas. The simple fact is, I must pay Lord George Sackville a bet of three hundred guineas this very morning, or fight him and stand dishonoured. The first alternative would be a very easy process ; for I suspect I am as good a master of fence as his lordship ; but the second would come whether I fought or not ; and it would be no great credit to the family that I cut

Sackey's throat rather than pay him a debt of honour."

"Give me the cheque book," said Mr. Haldimand, in a stern and bitter tone. "I will draw you a cheque for three hundred guineas."

"No use at all, most liberal of papas," replied the son. "I would rather not have it ; for I must have two hundred pounds more, and get it from Judas ; so that it will be a want of proper economy and a waste of paper to make you sign a cheque and him too."

"You shall have the money, sir, without having recourse to such disgraceful means," replied Mr. Haldimand gloomily ; "but let me warn you of one thing, Harry. All that you can command, even after my death, is your mother's fortune. Everything else is my own to leave to whom I like. You have already seen how I can act towards a child who offends me. Do not provoke me too far."

The young man was grave instantly ;

and a cloud came upon his brow. "If you will give me a settled income, sir," he said, "I will try to live within it. At all events I have not offended you in the way my sister did, but have endeavoured to make my inclinations subservient to your wishes."

"I shall certainly not make my son altogether independent of myself," replied Mr. Haldimand, "at least till his conduct is somewhat more reasonable ; but I am busy now, and cannot speak with you on such subjects. There is the cheque. Do not come to me for any more for the next three months at least ; and now leave me."

"Charming papa," said the young man, taking the cheque with all his levity in full force again. Making a low and sweeping bow to his father and his father's companion, he added, "I leave you to the excogitation of some admirable scheme for the good of society or the benefit of your own individualities ;" and then he tripped out of the room closing the door carefully behind him.

The servant looked at the master, and the master at the servant ; and, strange to say, both smiled. They then applied themselves to business again, which they soon settled ; and about an hour after, Mr. Matthew Hush called a hackney coach to the door, got into it, with several trunks and packages, which it might have been as wise in his master, considering all things, to have had examined before they departed, and began rolling away towards the west end of the town. Ere he had got a quarter of a mile, however, he put his head out of the window, and told the coachman to drive in a totally different direction. At four o'clock, he was safely packed in a Dorchester coach, with his goods and chattels on the top. The next morning he stopped at a small town some distance from the place of the stage's destination. There he breakfasted, and redressed himself in somewhat different costume from that in which he had hitherto appeared. He thought fit, however, to

wait for some hours in the place where he then was, in order to speak with the carrier about the conveyance of his luggage; after which he set off on foot for Haldistow, to which place there was no regular conveyance.

CHAPTER VI.

THE last chapter was an interlude. I have many doubts whether it ought to have been in the book at all ; for these dances between the acts are very abominable things, interrupting the course of action or of thought, and carrying the mind to *entrechats* and *pirouettes* which have nothing in general to do with the main business in hand. I say, in general ; for there are exceptions. Shakespeare, when he introduces the ghost of old Gower to speak a prologue to every act of "Pericles," and also to appear in the middle of some of the acts, does so, not to interrupt the march of the story, but fully to illustrate its progress ; and even ballet-masters have

been seen endowed with sufficient imagination and judgment to make the contortions of their "saltimbanks" and "tomblesteres" act as a sort of argument or introduction to what was to follow. In the present case, it seemed somewhat necessary, too, to say something of persons at a distance from the actual scene, inasmuch as in writing a book like this, there is some danger of accumulating so many explanations for the end of the work, that I have known the whole of the last volume occupied in laborious efforts to make the reader understand how Mr. So-and-So happened to do such and such a thing, recorded several hundred pages before, and comprehend the other events of the history which otherwise appeared exceedingly strange and inexplicable. In short, I do not think the poet's rule, to jump into the middle of things, is always quite applicable to romance-writing, and not always quite pleasant in poetry either.

To return however to Haldistow, and to

the Haldimand Arms. The bottle of wine which Mr. Greenshield ordered was produced, richly decorated with cobwebs, not recently collected and imposed upon the glass as is sometimes the case, but gathered slowly by various industrious spinners during the passing of many years. Well might the cobwebs accumulate in that bin ; for very rarely was the old port disturbed except when Mr. Greenshield was in the house. Ale, brandy, or rum satisfied the great majority of Tom Notbeame's guests ; and not a bottle had been abstracted from the pile during the twelve months which had elapsed since his present guest had been there before.

As one glass after another stole down the throat of Thomas Notbeame, it untied his tongue, and opened all the sources of his eloquence.

"And so, Tom," said Mr. Greenshield, "the bustard is for Sir John. I dare say he does not want it."

"Whether he wants it or not he shall

have it," answered the landlord. "He has got a number of people up at the hall; and such a bird is not to be seen every day, let me tell you. They used to be as plentiful as magpies; for I read once in an old book of a man having counted twenty of them riding across Salisbury plain; and he took them for little men that they called pigmies, and was frightened out of his life till he found out what they were, though why a man should be more frightened at little men than big, I can't tell."

"Men are always inclined to be frightened at unusual sights," said Mr. Greenshield.

"Not *all* men," answered Tom, "or I should have been frightened out of my wits long ago; for I have seen many an unusual one."

"As what?" asked his guest.

"Ay, that doesn't matter," answered Tom. "I hold my tongue and say nothing, though I see and even hear more than people think. In this wild place men fancy but little

goes on ; but there's plenty, I can tell you, besides what happens amongst the birds and beasts, and there's enough of that, for I do think more fowls of the air, and four-footed things come up to this moor and down by this Mere than in any part of England, be it where it will. This place always puts me in mind of the hundred and fourth psalm, where it says,

‘ He sendeth the springs
to strong streames or lakes,
Which runne doe full swifte
among the huge hils ;
Where both the wilde asses
their thirst oft times slakes,
And beastes of the mountaines
thereof drinke their fils.
By these pleasaunt springs
of fountaines full faire,
The fowles of the aire
abide shall and dwell,
Who moved by nature
to hop here and there,
Among the greene branches
their songs shall excell.’

I knew it all once ; but things slip

sadly out of my head ; but it's all up there in that little black book, if you like to see it, Mr. Greenshield."

"I know the book," answered the guest ; "I took it down and looked at it when I was last here ; and a very curious old work it is."

"So it is," replied Tom Notbeame ; "yet I don't agree with what old Sternhold and Hopkins say in the beginning—that 'balades tend only to the nourishing of vice, and corrupting of youth,' for I often think ballads do a great deal of good, such as those to be found in 'The Garland of Goodwill.' I am sure I've often sat and cried, when I was a boy, at the story of Fair Rosamond in the ballad, 'specially where she prayed so hard for pity. Don't you remember ?

"I will renounce my sinful life,
And in some cloister bide,
Or else be banished, if you please,
To range the world so wide.

And for the fault which I have done,
Though I was forced thereto,
Preserve my life, and punish me
As you think good to do.'

She must have been a hard-hearted old queen, that. And then the story of Bate-man's tragedy, what a story that is to make one mind what one's about! Well, well, I've seen strange things and read strange things too; and I can't help thinking if people read old ballads more they'd mind what they do better. They kept me from ever having anything to do with love, though I've heard folks talk a great deal about it; and I'm very glad of it, for I'm sure love is bad enough, and matrimony must be still worse."

"Come, Tom, tell us some of your strange tales," said Mr. Greenshield. "One wants something to enliven oneself this dull night. Do you hear how the wind is getting up, and the rain beginning to fall?"

"Ay," answered Tom Notbeame, "it is not always on the foulest nights that the

worst things happen. It was as fair a night as ever I knew, and as bright a moon shining, when I saw one of the saddest sights that could be seen."

Mr. Greenshield knew that to ask him to go on was the precise way to stop him. So he quietly put the bottle across to him. and Tom took another glass.

"Ay, it was a sad sight, that," he continued thoughtfully, sipping the wine. "I was ligging over behind the first sand-hills by the mere-side looking out for anything that was going on upon the moor, when I saw a poor young thing with a baby in her arms walk along by the side of the water, and sometimes stop, till I thought she was going to throw herself in, baby and all. So I watched her sharply, creeping along in the shadow. And when she went along the road, I went too ; for some people are very fanciful about suicide, and like one place better than another to do it in. When she passed this house, she sat herself down on that bench, and rested for a while.

I've never had it moved for her sake, poor thing ; and when she walked up along the stream I crept along still on the top of the bank, peeping at her through the trees till she got close to the park ; and then I said to myself—' What's going to come of it now ?' So I got over the park wall when she went over the stile ; and presently I saw her put the baby down on the step at the great door, and hide herself under the terrace. It seemed to me all very odd, odder than you can think ; and I was sure enough that her heart was well nigh breaking, poor thing ! before she went to do such a thing as that. However, when Sir John came home he took up the babe, and carried it into the house ; and I knew that there it was safe enough ; and so she knew too ; but she went away sobbing for all that, as if she were half strangled, and I followed her all the way down, and over the moor to see what became of her ; for I feared she might fall into some mischief."

“ And what *did* become of her ?” asked Mr. Greenshield.

“ Ay, that’s another story,” answered Tom. “ I wont tell that to-night.”

“ And did you ever find out who she was ?” enquired his guest.

“ No need of finding out,” answered Tom Notbeame. “ I knew all the time ; but I’m not going to tell. That would never do.”

“ And what became of the child ?” asked Mr. Greenshield, in a careless tone.

“ Why, Lord bless you, you’ve seen her often enough,” replied the landlord, “ sitting in Sir John’s pew at church. I’m sure you used to stare at her enough.”

“ What, you mean Miss Haldimand ?” said the guest. “ I thought her one of the most beautiful girls I ever beheld.”

“ Ay, and as good as beautiful,” answered Tom Notbeame ; “ but she has no right to the name of Haldimand for all that, and for all the lies the gossiping people may tell. Sir John don’t care about it ; and so

I've no need to trouble myself ; but they sometimes do make me angry."

" He seems very fond of her," answered the guest ; " and all the people call her his daughter."

" Ay, ay, they know no better," answered the landlord. " However, he loves her like a daughter ; and she has been a daughter to him. I should not wonder to see her the heiress of Haldistow. But this rain 'll make good fishing to-morrow ; and we shall have them all down ; for Sir John is as keen of the sport as when he was a lad. So you must keep the lower end of the water, sir, if you please."

" I shall not fish at all, if Sir John comes to fish," replied Mr. Greenshield. " It would not be courteous or civil, my good friend ; but I can walk about and amuse myself ; and now I shall go to bed."

" Well, sir, good night," replied Tom, as the other rose.

' May good sleep attend you,
And kind dreams befriend you.'

That's not to say, however, that you need mind fishing if you like it ; for Sir John never cares provided gentlemen keep to the mark. So you can do quite as you like."

The stranger, however, did not think fit to fish ; for very early in the morning, the rain having cleared away, but the clouds still skimming over the sky and sporting with the sunbeams, several signs and tokens gave notice of Sir John Haldimand's intention to come down with a party from the Hall and fish the mere himself. A large store of fishing-tackle was brought down by a servant ; the boat was carefully swept out and cleaned ; and Mr. Greenshield, retiring to his own chamber, put off his rough and somewhat rustic costume, took some pains with the arrangement of his hair, fitted on a new pair of gloves, and came down again, a very different looking man from that which he went up. His dress indeed did not pretend to anything like smartness ; but there was a neat, clean propriety about it which

gave him a much more gentlemanly and distinguished appearance than lace and embroidery could have afforded. Thus attired, after having breakfasted, he went out into the little garden, and seating himself under a tree, took a book out of his pocket filled with strange looking characters. Tom Notbeame was at the moment waiting anxiously for the appearance of his landlord and master ; but the sight of a book had always a strange sort of fascination for him ; and he ventured to look over Mr. Greenshield's shoulder, and then exclaimed—

“Lord, sir, what funny letters! They are Greek, I suppose?”

“No, my good friend,” replied the guest. “They are Persian. It is the work of a famous poet of that country ; and this is a song in praise of love and wine.”

“Ay, love and wine,” said Tom Notbeame, “that's the burden of all the old songs, or almost all of them ; but I think the wine is the best part of the ballad,

though I mustn't say so, or I shall have my ears pulled."

' These women all,
Both great and small,
Are wavering to and fro,
Now here, now there,
Now everywhere,
But I must not say so.

They love to range,
Their minds to change,
And make their friend their foe ;
For lovers true,
Each day choose new ;
But I may not say so.

Thus one and another
Taketh after their mother,
As cock by kind doth crow.
My song is ended.
The best may be mended,
But I may not say so.'

" Fie, fie, Tom," said Mr. Greenshield,
" you must not lampoon ladies or you
will fare worse for it some day. The

shrewdest of us may be caught at last ; and when you take unto you a wife, she may, perhaps, make you pay dear for your wicked satires."

" Ah, sir, if ever such a foul fate befall me," said Tom Notbeame, " I shall give myself up entirely to her rule and governance :—

‘ There is no man
Whose wisdom can
Reform a wilful wife ;
But only God
Who made the rod
For our unthrifty life.’

But, sometimes I think, sir, *you* are looking out for a wife," he continued, with a glance at Mr. Greenshield's trim apparel. " I hope I shan't scare you with my idle songs," and he laughed loud and merrily.

" No, no, Tom," said his guest. " No man in love was ever scared from his fancy by a song. But, my good friend, I shall

never see forty-five again ; and that is somewhat too old for love."

" But not for penance, sir," answered Tom, laughing still more. " However, here comes Sir John and all the people from the Hall. Jack, Jack, quick, get hold of the chain of the boat !"

" Who is that young gentleman in the blue frock, with the gold lace, talking so busily to Miss Haldimand ?" demanded Mr. Greenshield, eyeing the party as it came down the road.

" That's the Colonel, sir," answered Tom Notbeame ; " Colonel Charles, Mr. Richard's son."

" And who is the lady behind with the gentleman in brown ?" asked his guest.

" Hang it, sir, I can't stop," replied Tom Notbeame ; " and if I could, I shouldn't be able to tell, for I don't know." So saying, he walked away out of his garden-gate to meet his master, hat in hand.

The worthy old baronet, dressed in sporting attire and with a lady of middle age

upon his arm, came down the road with a step as elastic as if he had been in youth. He looked gayer and more cheerful than when he was first presented to the reader ; for the society of the sweet girl, who followed him closely, had exercised a balmy influence, even more powerful than that of time ; healing the wounds of the heart, and softening the memory of the one great sorrow which had affected all his early life. Walking rapidly on, he nodded and spoke kindly to Tom Notbeame ; and, taking his way round the house, accompanied by that personage, proceeded to the boat-house and handed the ladies of the party into the boat. His eye rested for a moment upon Mr. Greenshield, who continued sitting in the garden ; but he took no further notice of the stranger ; and the boat was soon seen pushed off from the land.

Mr. Greenshield continued in the same spot where he had seated himself, watching the proceedings of the party with evident interest. Though he still held the book in

his hand, he did not take his eyes off the boat for a moment ; and the sight of a large fish struck, hooked, skilfully played, and taken, soon gratified him—if it was the old angler spirit which excited so much interest in the scene.

For nearly two hours he continued to watch the party, without ever stirring from the spot ; and then a slow, quiet step behind, startled him from his contemplation and made him suddenly turn round. The person who approached, was a man somewhat past the middle age, dressed in the garb of a clergyman—which, in those days, was more distinctly marked than at present ; and, as he advanced towards the edge of the waters he bowed to Mr. Greenshield with a kind and benevolent smile. The year before, and the year before that, during about six weeks in the spring, and for a short period in the autumn, Mr. Richard Haldimand had seen Tom Notbeame's lodger regularly in the parish church every Sunday. He had

never, indeed, met him before in any of his walks ; but the face had impressed itself strongly on the clergyman's memory, from the fact of Mr. Greenshield having been taken ill and obliged to leave the church on the very first Sunday of his appearance in the congregation. Mr. Greenshield instantly rose, and returned the rector's salutation with grace and dignity ; and a few words regarding the weather, the universal opening of conversation in England, soon led them to talk of other things as they walked on together quite to the edge of the water.

“ I thought I should have found my brother returning,” said the clergyman, as he looked over the Mere and saw the boat with Sir John and his party at a considerable distance ; “ but he seems as busily engaged in his sport as ever.”

“ And will be, for an hour or two, I should think,” replied Mr. Greenshield ; “ for I see the fish are very ravenous this morning ; and the spot is so beautiful

that, even were the sport at an end, one might very well prolong the hours, floating in dreamy contemplation on the Mere."

Richard Haldimand smiled, saying—

"It is, indeed, a very lovely scene ; and, though I have been familiar with it from boyhood, it never loses its charm for me. I have an affection for every sandypoint and old tree, a sort of fellowship with the shrubs of the wood and the cliffs of the rock."

"Nevertheless," answered Mr. Greenshield, "I think something might be done to improve even what is beautiful. I think that wood over there casts too much unbroken shadow on the water, especially when the sun is to the west. A little interlucation would not be amiss ; for I know nothing more beautiful than a gleam of the setting sun pouring here and there through the trees upon the water."

"I dare say you speak with the judgment of a painter," replied the clergyman ; "but yet I could hardly spare any of the

old trees. I hate the sound of an axe. I have a sort of fanciful impression that there is life and feeling in these ancient giants ; and I do not love to see them fall."

" Oh, yes, I would always reverence the Hamadryads," answered his companion ; " but yet, a fondness for picturesque beauty struggles against such charity."

Richard Haldimand was not an inquisitive man ; but yet the stranger's conversation excited some degree of curiosity. He found him a man of much taste, of considerable learning, and of very general information ; and he could not imagine what could have brought such a person down, to spend long weeks in so dull and quiet a place as Haldistow.

" I am afraid you must find your residence here somewhat uninteresting," he said ; " for there is not much society in the place."

" I have none," replied Mr. Greenshield ; " but I make my society, while here, in the

woods and moors, where I endeavour to realize the words of the great poet, and

‘ Find tongue in trees, books in the running
 brooks,
Sermons in stones, and good in every thing.’

To say truth, living a great deal in London, I am glad enough to escape from time to time to the quiet of the country, and be free from the sight of the vice, the wickedness, and the folly of a great town.”

“ It is indeed a horrible place,” replied Richard Haldimand, “ at least to my taste ; and when I am there, which is very rarely, I cannot help feeling a sort of contamination in the very air, from which I am glad to escape, as from the atmosphere of a city stricken with the plague.”

“ Vice is certainly infectious,” said Mr. Greenshield ; “ but nevertheless, not so much so, I trust, as that no one can escape

the contagion, even in crowded cities. There, I believe, we shall find the highest virtues, as well as the darkest vices ; and each have their reward :

‘ The impartial Gods, who, from the mounted
Heavens,
View us, their mortal herd, behold who err,
And in their time chastise.’

I have passed much of my time in cities, in that wrestling with the world which you probably have never known ; and one of the effects has been to give the face of nature and all the beautiful features it displays, a glory and a loveliness in my eyes, which those who have not been denied the sight for months and years together, cannot, I believe, comprehend. It is not indeed,” he added, somewhat abruptly, “ that I dislike society. Far from it. I enjoy it much, when it is quiet and intelligent. But there is no such thing as society in great capitals. There are visitings, and parties, and spectacles, and courts, but very little, if any, society.”

The clergyman mused, and then enquired if his companion intended to stay long at Haldistow.

“ My usual time, about six weeks,” replied Mr. Greenshield. “ You must know that I am an angler too, and am exceedingly fond of the sport.”

“ How happens it you are not on the water to-day then ?” asked Richard Haldimand.

The stranger explained ; but his companion assured him that his brother would be much grieved to hear that he had refrained from enjoying any amusement on his account, adding—“ There is room upon the Mere for many more parties than one.”

A few minutes after, the boat was seen returning towards the shore ; and the clergyman, going to join his brother as the party landed, left Mr. Greenshield in the garden, but carried with him a very pleasant impression of that gentleman’s mind and manners.

CHAPTER VII.

ON the evening of Mr. Greenshield's first arrival at the house of Tom Notbeame, a personage was introduced to the reader, of whose antecedents some slight notion was given in the subsequent chapter. After leaving the inn, well satisfied at not being called upon to do a thing he particularly disliked, namely to pay, Matthew Hush walked on along the road, passed the end of the little path, which crossed a meadow and led to the park stile, then left the gates of the park behind him, and turning to the right, wound his way down to the little village of Haldistow, with the curious old church of early English architecture

rising on the highest point of the ground — the parsonage, a fine old mansion, with good gardens just opposite — and a little stream running by the side of the village green. On this green, detached from all other houses, stood the stithy, with a neat white cottage attached to it of no mean extent ; for Jack Martyr, the smith, was well to do in the world, and carried on what might be called, a roaring trade, besides having the advantage of shoeing all Sir John Haldimand's horses.

The twilight was very gray when Matthew Hush approached ; but from the light of the sky and the light of the forge, he could distinguish plainly enough the carrier's cart standing before the stithy, several packages upon the ground, and the carrier conversing with a stout, broad-built, grey-headed man, the sleeves of whose shirt were rolled up, according to custom, far above the elbows.

“ To be left here ! ” cried Jack Martyr,

in a rough, hoarse voice. "What the devil should he send them here for? I know who he is well enough; for unluckily he is my wife's nephew; but I have not seen or heard of him for more than five and twenty years; and if he isn't mended since he went, the less one hears of him the better, maybe."

"Well, I was to leave them here, however," said the carrier; "and, as they are paid for, there can be no great harm in taking them in, Mr. Martyr."

"Not so sure of that," answered the blacksmith gruffly. "Here, Bill, call my missis; I'll ask her what's to be done. He's a fellow that sticks tight when once he gets hold. He welds himself on to another man, as it were; and you might as well try to break a plough coulter with a pair of wire nippers, as to shake him off when once he's fastened and cold."

The greater part of these speeches, not very satisfactory to his ear, were heard by Matthew Hush as he approached; but he

had gone through a great deal too much in life to be daunted by a blacksmith ; and without the slightest loss of confidence or composure he walked straight up to good Jack Martyr, saying, in his easy, self-satisfied tone :

“ Ah, my right dear and well-beloved uncle, how have you been this long while ? You see I have come back at last to spend a little time in my native place ; and I am glad to see my trunks have arrived before me.”

The blacksmith drew back and eyed him from head to foot with a look of surprise.

“ And are *you* young Matthew Hush ?” he exclaimed. “ Well, I should not have known you anywhere ; and if you are as much changed inside as out, you may be worth something after all.”

“ To be sure I am,” answered Matthew Hush. “ I have grown steady as well as old, uncle Martyr ; and the best proof of it is that I have remained in one family so many years.”

The blacksmith grumbled forth something which was not very distinct ; but a few of the words had certainly reference to *birds of a feather* ; and as one of his workmen had called forth good Mrs. Martyr according to his orders, the rest of his speech was cut short by the appearance of the dame herself.

“ There, missis,” he said, in his usual gruff tones, “ there’s your nephew—you must do something with him I suppose ;” and quietly turning into the stithy, in two minutes he was hammering red hot iron again.

The matter was soon arranged between Mrs. Martyr and her nephew ; for she was of that peculiar species of human being called, the good sort of woman ; and she agreed to furnish Matthew Hush with board and lodging for a few days till he could look about him. The good blacksmith, when he came in to supper and found his worthy connexion seated in the parlour, seemed to take it all as a matter

of course ; and though it cannot be affirmed that he was very civil, (for he could not brush out from the chest of memory many of the cobwebs which good Matthew's previous conduct had left behind), yet he was not absolutely rude ; and that was something. His two sons, gay, light-hearted lads, were delighted to see their cousin ; and he contrived to ingratiate himself with them by tales and anecdotes and smart sayings so far, as somewhat to alarm the father, who took an opportunity, before they went to bed, of saying privately to them :

“Do not you have too much to do with that fellow till we see more of him. He was a bad one when he was a lad ; and he has lived all his life in a place where he was not likely to be made a good one.”

Upon the whole, Matthew Hush's reception in his native village was not very auspicious, but compensation came on the following day. As soon as he thought that Mr. Richard Haldimand had breakfasted

he set off to pay his respects, as he had arranged with his master, and was admitted immediately. He found the clergyman reading a letter in which he recognized Mr. William Haldimand's hand ; but his reception was very gracious ; and after he had finished the perusal of the epistle, the rector laid it on the table, saying—" I have just had a letter about you, Matthew, from my brother William. He tells me you have been in ill health, which I am sorry to hear. What has been the matter with you ?"

Now this was a question which was difficult to answer with anything like truth : not that such a circumstance was likely to stand much in Master Matthew Hush's way ; but he did not know exactly whether his master had stated any specific complaint ; and he also had a pleasure—that sort of pleasure which the skilful in any art experience from dexterous manipulation—in lying like truth. After a moment's, or half a moment's, consideration he replied :

“I am very much obliged to you, sir. London never agreed with me well ; and lately I have been threatened with an affection of the throat, which the gentleman I consulted thought might prove dangerous if I remained longer in town. I was very sorry to quit my master, who has always been a good master to me ; but, he said himself, as he thought his permitting me to come down here might save me from worse, he was kind enough to let me go.”

“Have you been to see my brother John?” asked the clergyman thoughtfully.

“No, sir, I did not venture to go to him,” replied Matthew ; “not because my father voted against him at the election, for I knew he would forgive that ; but because when I was down here, as a lad, I offended Sir John a good deal, I am afraid. I was a very thoughtless youth, and had got in with a parcel of wild young scamps, who led me whatever way they pleased. I am sure the kindness of Mr. William in taking me into his service has been the

saving of me. God bless him for it. I shall ever be most grateful to him, I am sure."

It is wonderful how well Matthew Hush knew his man. He was well aware that Mr. Richard Haldimand had no very great attachment to, or respect for, his master; but he was also quite sure that to say one word against Mr. William Haldimand, or even to appear the least ungrateful, was the last way in the world to recommend himself to the clergyman.

Richard was very well pleased with his answer. There seemed no affectation about it which could startle even a suspicious heart; and that, Heaven knows, his was not. He therefore paused for a moment, in his deliberate way, and then enquired what his visitor intended to do with himself.

"I must look about for some occupation, sir," replied Matthew Hush, in an indifferent tone. "I feel myself quite refreshed and better already; and although I have

saved a little money in Mr. William's service, it will not do to be idle."

"Certainly not," answered the clergyman. "What employment are you looking for?"

"Oh, really I do not know, sir," answered the worthy Matthew, "anything I can get. I do not care much whether it is high or low, whether the wages are great or not, provided the family doesn't live in London, where I should be sure to have the feeling of strangling come back upon me. I have been acting as valet and butler in Mr. William's house for the last six years; but I must not be particular."

"I will see what can be done for you," said Mr. Richard Haldimand. "Old Lewellyn, my brother John's butler, is dead; and he has not yet got another; for all the other men in the house are too young. I will speak to him about you; but of course I can promise you nothing till I hear what he says."

"Oh, sir, don't take the trouble," said Matthew Hush, in the most modest manner

possible. "I am very much obliged to you; but I am sure Sir John would never think of taking me. People don't easily forget the pranks that foolish young men play in their youth. Why even Martyr, my aunt's husband, though he knows I have been going on as steadily as possible for more than twenty years, looked quite cold upon me at first when I came back last night."

"Martyr is a very worthy, but a somewhat rude man," answered Richard Haldimand; "and I have remarked it is very difficult to remove from his mind any opinion he has once taken up. My brother John is a very different person."

"Of course, sir, of course," replied Matthew Hush. "Sir John is a noble-minded gentleman in every way, and few like him for learning; but when there are so many who would be glad enough to serve him, he is not likely to take one whom he may not think well of."

"We shall see, we shall see," replied Mr. Richard Haldimand. "Of course I can promise nothing, as I said; but I will

take the first opportunity of speaking to him, lest other people should apply; and you shall hear the result."

Some farther conversation followed; and then Mr. Hush took his leave. He was an admirable actor, practised upon the stage, up to every trick of the scene, trod the boards firmly, and never forgot the by-play. When about three quarters of an hour afterwards Mr. Richard Haldimand issued forth with the purpose of walking down to the Mere and meeting his brother as he returned from fishing, he had to pass through the churchyard; and there at some distance from the path on the right hand side, where he was neither very conspicuous nor very much hidden, he saw the figure of Mr. Matthew Hush, seated in a thoughtful attitude gazing at a grave-stone. He took no notice, and passed on; but upon reflection he remembered that just about the place where he had seen the man sitting, lay buried the body of Martha, widow of Josiah Hush, and mother of Matthew. His

meeting with his brother at the edge of the lake has been described ; but, in the course of the walk back to the hall, Mr. Haldimand found an opportunity of commending the case of Matthew Hush to his brother's notice.

The name did not seem very savoury to Sir John Haldimand. "I know not what he is now, Dick," said the baronet, "but he was a bad fellow when he went away ; and I don't like the school he has been studying in."

This brought forth an elaborate defence of Matthew Hush from the worthy clergyman, who told all the man had said, and all he himself had remarked.

"Well, Dick, well," replied Sir John, "I am very willing to do anything I can for him, and should have no objection, on your report, to give him a trial ; but there is an obstacle which may prevent my doing so. Sir Harrington Hounslow is parting with his butler ; the man has applied for my place ; and I have appointed two o'clock this day

for seeing him. First come, you know, Richard, first served. If the man's character is what I like, he will have the place. If not, I may try your friend, Matthew Hush, after I have had a little conversation with him myself ; but let him clearly understand that the slightest appearance of returning to old tricks will produce his immediate discharge. Who was that you were talking with in the garden, just now ? He seemed a very gentleman-like man in his appearance ; and his face is familiar to me."

"He is a man of extraordinary information and very agreeable manners," answered the clergyman. "I dare say you have seen him in church ; for he has been down here fishing every spring for the last two or three years. I never spoke to him till to-day, and was quite surprised and pleased. —Will you let me know, John, when you have decided in regard to Hush ?"

"You shall hear as soon as I have seen the other man," answered his brother. "If

I do take him, it will only be upon trial, Dick ; for you are easily cozened, my dear boy—" and then seeing the colour mount a little in his brother's cheek, he added, with an affectionate pressure of his brother's hand, " God forbid that it should be otherwise, Richard ; for to be a mere suspicious man would not make you a happier man, and would certainly make you a worse clergyman. There, there is Kate looking back. You have not said a word to her to-day. You go and talk to her while I flirt with the old ladies."

That same evening Mr. Richard Haldimand received a note from his brother to the following effect :

" MY DEAR DICK,

" Hounslow's butler will not do. I can see from the cautious character he has written of him that the man is a sot if not a thief into the bargain. He says he has never detected him in any act of dishonesty, and that he parts with him because he had

remarked him to be not sober on one occasion. Poor commendation this, I think. The man attempted to explain ; but his excuses were as old as the time of Noah ; and his nose bore testimony against him. I never saw such a nose manufactured out of anything but port wine.

“ If you know where to find him, send up Hush to me to-morrow at ten. I will see what I can make of him. Let me have a sight of William’s letter too. You can send it up by the bearer to

“ Your affectionate brother,

“ JOHN HALDIMAND.”

When he got William’s letter to Richard, Sir John read it attentively ; once or twice looked very grave, and once or twice smiled slightly.

“ Somewhat stupid !” he exclaimed, as he read one passage. “ That’s the highest commendation William has yet given ; but Master Hush used not to have that charac-

ter. I wonder what William calls sharp. I suppose the man has really turned honest, otherwise he could not with William have worked out the reputation of being stupid."

The next morning, precisely at ten, Mr. Hush stood in the presence of Sir John Haldimand. He seemed a little nervous, and was so really ; for he knew that he had a very different person to deal with from the clergyman.

"And so you have left my brother William ?" said Sir John, keeping a steady eye upon the man. "Had you any reason to be dissatisfied with my brother, or with the place ?"

"None in the world, sir," answered Matthew Hush. "A better master never was ; and I would willingly have gone on serving him till my dying day if I could have had my health in London."

This answer pleased Sir John as it had pleased Mr. Richard Haldimand ; but seeing that the man's manner was still some-

what agitated, he said, "What was your complaint ? Was it a nervous disorder ?"

"Oh, dear no, sir," answered Hush, who knew how to draw advantage even from his own infirmities. "I am only a little nervous at presenting myself before you, sir, after all that happened before I went away. I cannot think that even now you can look over it. Forget it, I am sure you cannot."

"Of course not," replied Sir John Haldimand ; "but if you show me that your character and your conduct are changed, and that you have seen the folly as well as the wickedness of such courses, the past will only be remembered by me to your honour ; for though every man is weak enough to fall, upon occasions, not every one is strong enough to rise again uninjured."

How often do we pour water into sand in this life ! It is one of man's most constant occupations. We may well conceive that Sir John Haldimand, though by no

means given to preach, had in his exhortation to good Matthew Hush been simply pouring water upon sand. It seemed to sink in, to be drawn up every drop ; but the sand was no moister than before.

Mr. Hush, however, not having read the lessons of the world in vain, had remarked that strong professions formed the vulgar resource of the very lowest cast of hypocrites, and that people were much upon their guard against them. He took care therefore always to be extremely moderate in his promises, which had two good effects. It did not startle or alarm by exaggeration ; and when he found it convenient to break those he had made, the fault appeared less. He therefore replied, in a humble yet decided tone, " No man can ever answer for himself sir, when once he has committed such follies as I have done ; but I will do my best to avoid them always. I do not think anybody can accuse me of anything of the kind for the last twenty years and more ; so that I

have had some trial ; and the temptations to go wrong are not likely to be as great here as in London. I trust, therefore, I shall not give you occasion to regret your kindness if you think fit to engage me."

" You may consider yourself engaged," replied the old baronet, who, though not so fully deceived as his brother Richard, yet conceived good hope that Matthew Hush might be an altered man. " When do you think you will be well enough to come ?"

" Whenever you please, sir," answered Matthew Hush. " I felt myself better the moment I quitted London, and have lost all that unpleasant sensation I had, as if I should not be able to draw my breath much longer."

" It must have been nervous," said the baronet.

" Probably it was, sir," replied Matthew ; " for I had a great deal of shaking and sinking of the heart too ; but I have quite got over that now, and can come to-night if you like."

“So be it, then,” answered Sir John Haldimand. “I have several persons staying in the house ; and the want of a servant is inconvenient. Nevertheless I by no means desire you to come if you do not feel yourself quite capable.”

So, however, it was arranged. Matthew Hush had a great idea of doing business rapidly ; and he took possession of his place that very night. He showed himself at once perfectly competent to his duties, and performed his functions at the side-board with all the grave, graceful and imposing dignity of a London butler. When he retired to his room for the night, however, before he proceeded to take repose, he, in a true philosophical spirit, wound up the day with meditation. He thought he might as well consider a little his plan of action, and what was to be the result of his operations. If we might clothe his thoughts in words, they would be somewhat to the following effect :

“So far, so well. Capital progress in

four days, I think, and all owing to my own abilities ; for that humbug letter did little or nothing for me. They know him too well to trust him much ; but now what am I to do ? What's to be the next step ? Am I to go on working all the time for him just because he has got a grip upon my neck, and then when I've done all that he wants, leave him with his hold on still to give me another squeeze whenever he wants anything else ? No, no, Mr. Haldimand, I must have some hold on *you* to balance your hold on me. I must contrive some way to make things equal ; for this is not fair play. However, the first thing is to seem to be doing everything he wants. Ay, and to do it too, as far as it is needful. I must get some information about this will somehow. I will try and come over old Mrs. Giles, the housekeeper, who looks as fresh and well-preserved as she was five and twenty years ago. She was always in Sir John's confidence ; and, though she has looked at me to-night as if I were a toad,

I'll come round her. She must have a soft spot somewhere. Perhaps she may not know all ; but she must guess ; and guesses may lead to certainties. Nothing like putting two and two together ; and my first attack shall be upon her."

With this sage reflection, Mr. Hush went to bed, and, as we novelists say, slept the sweet sleep of infancy.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE morning was fine after a showery day ; and Colonel Charles Haldimand was up almost with the dawn. It was not that he rose refreshed from the pleasant repose which a high heart and a favourable position in society, good health, good spirits, and a conscience clear of reproach might well be supposed to know ; for he had hardly closed an eye all night. He, nevertheless, opened one of the glass doors of the rectory, and walked out into the garden. There he paced up and down the longest of the gravel walks for nearly an hour. Flowers were bursting into bloom all around him ; but he noticed them not. The bright rain-

drops on the leaves and on the grass, were no longer gems in his sight as they used to be in other days. He heeded not the songs of the birds, once so musical to his ear. Colonel Haldimand was evidently uneasy. There was something that oppressed him. It had oppressed him all the evening before at his uncle's house, whither he had gone to dine with his father and mother ; and his demeanour had been grave, if not sad ; his manner, though perfectly gentlemanly, somewhat abrupt.

The father had not remarked this. He had conversed sometimes with Sir John, sometimes with his brother's guest, Lady Martindale, who was a first cousin of the late Lady Haldimand ; sometimes with her son, the young Lord Martindale, sometimes with her niece Alice, a sweet girl of eighteen, and sometimes with his brother's adopted daughter Catherine ; but he had taken little notice of his son's demeanour to any of them.

Men's eyes are not very microscopical.

In general they do not easily perceive small things ; but women do, and Mrs. Haldimand perceived, and perceived with pain, that something made her son uneasy. Of course she did not rest satisfied thus ; but watched, with a mother's anxious tenderness, for every little trait which might lead her step by step towards a discovery of the cause ; and she thought she made some progress. She remarked that, when young Lord Martindale approached Kate Haldimand, and entered into conversation with her, Charles turned his eyes away, and pertinaciously would not look at them. If they were near enough for him to hear what they said, he walked to the other side of the room, and talked to somebody else, though with an evident effort. He did not, as usual, go close to Kate's chair when she was singing, and left Lord Martindale to turn over the leaves of the music book. Mrs. Haldimand perceived all this ; and a light began to dawn upon her, which perhaps ought to have dawned upon her before.

It is no excuse for her blindness that the light had not dawned upon Colonel Haldimand himself ; but still so it was, and she meditated sagely upon all she saw now that her eyes were opened. She resolved indeed to see more, and learn more, before she spoke with her husband on the subject ; for, though she had the utmost love for him, and confidence in him, she judged that with a matter such as she believed this to be, a woman was better fitted to deal, at least in the beginning, than a man.

When Colonel Haldimand had walked up and down the garden for nearly an hour, as I have said, meditating so deeply that he saw nothing around, his mother put her head out of the glass door by which he had gone forth, then returned, for a moment, into the house to procure a shawl, and then came back again and joined him in his walk. She was a simple-minded, gentle, kind woman, but by no means deficient in good sense or strength of character ; and she thought it always the best way to begin

a conversation on anything important with the subject itself.

“What is the matter my dear Charles?” she said, after having wished her son good morning. “You are evidently uneasy about something.”

“I am trying to find out, my dear mother,” answered Charles Haldimand, frankly. “I am not in very good spirits, it is true.”

“Let me help you, Charles,” said his mother; “for it is better you should have some one to consult with than rack your own brains and torture your own heart by keeping all the struggle that is going on within your own bosom.”

“I shall be very happy, indeed, of any help,” responded Charles Haldimand, “although I do not see what good it can do.”

“O, a great deal,” replied Mrs. Haldimand. “Answer me truly, then, my dear son. Have you not felt this uneasiness ever since you saw young Lord Martindale

paying such particular attention to our dear Kate ?”

“No,” answered Colonel Haldimand, “I do not think so. The day of the fishing party, I heard him talking soft nonsense to her in the boat ; but that did not make me at all uneasy ; for I felt sure that Kate would only think it trash.”

“My dear Charles,” replied Mrs. Haldimand, “all men talk soft nonsense to women when they are in love with them ; and women have a sort of instinct that it must be so, which prevents them from classing, under as trash words which they might laugh at other circumstances.”

“Then you believe he *is* in love with her ?” demanded Colonel Haldimand, turning upon his mother so quickly as almost to startle her.

She answered him truly, however, saying—“I do ; but not desperately in love. Now, my dear Charles,” she continued, seeing him turn very pale and then very red, “you have been eager and impetuous

from your boyhood. You must promise me that you will act in no degree rashly."

"I do not see, mother, how I can act at all," answered her son. "I do not understand what you mean by acting rashly."

"Why, jealousy is a very angry sort of passion, Charles," answered his mother; "and people, under its influence, are very apt to find causes of quarrel, where none are really given."

"Can you really suspect me of such a thing?" asked Colonel Haldimand, in a calm but sad tone. "I can pretend to no right, my dear mother, to prevent Lord Martindale from paying his addresses to Kate. Nor can I put myself in any competition with him. He has wealth and station to offer her; and, for aught I know, higher qualities of heart and mind than myself. He is a younger man, too, than I am, and will have more opportunity. It would be unjust to Kate, unjust to him, and discreditable to myself, were I to attempt to

stop him." And again folding his arms upon his chest, he walked slowly on by his mother's side.

Mrs. Haldimand kept silence likewise for a moment or two, not very well knowing whether it might not be better to suffer her son's gloomy view of the case to remain, at least till she saw how affairs might turn; but then maternal affection prompted her to comfort him; and she thought that it would be unfair to suffer him to give up a pursuit in despair which so much affected his happiness, and to her appeared by no means desperate.

"To attempt to stop him," she said at length, "would be at once wrong and impolitic; but to attempt to make your own cause good with Kate, if you really love her, Charles, would, I think, be only fair to her and to yourself. She is not one, my dear son, to look upon either rank or wealth as any very striking recommendations; and you have this great advantage over Lord Martindale, that she has known you

and had the strongest affection for you from childhood."

"Oh, yes, she has loved me as an elder brother," replied Colonel Haldimand; "but that is all, my dear mother; and I am sure I never knew that I loved her as anything but as a sister till I returned after this long two years' absence. Then it was I saw how beautiful and how graceful she really is, how unlike and, surely I may say, superior to any of the young women with whom I have mingled in the world. Even then I should not have known that it was love I felt towards her, and should have gone away perhaps just as I came, had it not been that this young lordling's attentions made me so uneasy, and set me to question my own heart as to its feelings towards Kate."

Mrs. Haldimand had listened with a quiet smile; but now she replied, "May it not be the same with Kate, Charles? She may not know how well she loves you either, and is not likely to know till, by

some means, you make her heart ask itself the question."

"Then you do not think she loves him?" asked Charles eagerly.

"I must not take upon me to say that," replied his mother. "From what I see, I should judge, not yet at all events. She she has as little coquetry in her disposition as any girl I ever saw; and she certainly did not seem to treat Lord Martindale as anything more than a pleasant acquaintance; and you must acknowledge, Charles, that he is a very agreeable, well-informed, gentlemanly young man."

"So people say," answered Colonel Haldimand, with the slightest possible touch of impatience in his tone; "for my own part I do not see anything particularly attractive in him."

His mother smiled; and, interpreting her look in his own way, he continued, "Well, it may be prejudice; and perhaps in this case I am not a fair judge; but yet—"

“Nay, Charles, do not fight with shadows,” said his mother. “I smiled to think that you should be really jealous of a man for whom you have so little esteem and admiration. However, I think it but fair to let Kate know your feelings towards her; but before you propose, I suppose, of course, you will speak to your father.”

Colonel Haldimand fell into thought; and it was not till after he had passed some minutes in silence that he said in a meditative kind of way. “Propose!—what have I to propose? Will it be really fair to her to tell her that I love her at all? I have nothing to offer, my dear mother. I have my sword and my good name, the allowance which my father makes me out of an income not over large for himself. Ought I to say a word? Ought I not rather to remain silent as I have hitherto done, and let her find happiness elsewhere?”

“No,” answered his mother, in a decided one. “I have often heard your excellent

uncle say that he had provided amply for Kate. Nor has your father, my dear Charles, been unmindful of his son. I do not mean to say that in a union with you she would find wealth ; but, at all events, you would both have competence ; and I am quite sure that would be all she would desire. I would therefore put such considerations out of the question, and merely consider whether, from what you have seen and know of her, she is likely to accept you. It is an old adage, that no *gentleman* was ever refused by a *lady*, meaning, I suppose, that no man of real gentlemanly feeling would offer his hand, without such encouragement as no lady, worthy of the name, could give, and then reject his proposals ; but that does not imply that you should not take every means to let her see and know your affection, in order that she may regulate her own conduct to you accordingly."

Mrs. Haldimand paused for a moment, and then added, " Of one thing, how-

ever, my dear Charles, be certain, that the way to win a woman's affection is not by quarrelling with another lover."

Her son smiled, understanding his mother's apprehensions, and not a little encouraged by her brighter view. "Do not be afraid," he said. "I trust I shall always be ready to vindicate my honour ; but I feel in this instance, my dear mother, that you are right. It would be quite unjustifiable to seek a quarrel with any man for loving a person whom I think worthy of all love. However, I will leave Kate in doubt no longer ; and then let her decide. Do you know how long these people are going to stay?"

"Till Monday, I understand," replied Mrs. Haldimaud ; "but I think, Charles, whatever you do, you should speak to your father first ; for a want of confidence on your part would, I am sure, give him very great pain."

"He shall never suffer that pain from any fault of mine, my dear mother," an-

swered Charles ; “ but I had better speak to him as soon as possible ; for delays are, I suppose, in such cases, as dangerous as in all others ; and I would fain learn my fate as soon as possible.”

“ Ever impetuous, Charles,” said his mother ; “ but still, perhaps, you are right ; and now I will go in and make breakfast.”

In less than two hours, Colonel Haldimand was on his horse’s back, and cantering towards the hall. As the family at the rectory were a good deal more matutinal in their habits than the household of Sir John Haldimand, he found breakfast not over when he arrived. Lord Martindale was seated by the side of Kate ; and Sir John himself was next to her on the other side ; but she welcomed Colonel Haldimand with more warmth and affection even than was usual with her ; and her bright dark eyes sparkled, and her colour deepened in hue, as he entered the room.

These were very comfortable signs to the lover ; but yet he doubted whether he ought in reality to derive comfort from them. All lovers are sad tormentors of their own hearts : he knew that Kate had the strongest sisterly affection for him ; and he was accustomed to see the quick, generous blood of the heart, upon very slight emotions, rush over her cheek and brow, dyeing the fair skin, as the sun's last look touches the light clouds of evening.

“ It was but that she did not expect me till dinner time,” he said within himself ; but still, in spite of the heart's perversity, he was comforted by his reception.

He sat down to the table beside Lady Martindale, not to breakfast again, but to watch for the opportunity he longed for ; and by a strong resolution he banished from his manner not only all traces of the uneasiness which he betrayed but too strongly the night before, but also all appearance of that earnest thoughtfulness which the feel-

ings so busy at his heart had a strong tendency to produce.

“What is to be the expedition for to-day, my dear uncle?” he said, as he seated himself. “And may I be permitted to make one?”

“No expedition at all, soldier,” said Sir John. “You do not think that my house is a camp, do you, and that we must always be out foraging? No, my dear Charles. Lady Martindale is rather tired with all her expeditions; so we will put off our visit to Burg-loft till to-morrow, when we shall count upon you either in the saddle or the carriage as you may think fit.”

“And O, Charles,” exclaimed Kate, with a slight blush fluttering over her cheek again, “remember before you go to-day I want to speak to you for a minute. I have a petition to present, which I do not know whether you will grant or not; and I won’t be refused in public.”

Charles could have got up and kissed her. He knew how rarely opportunity is

granted to those who watch for it, while it falls to those who neither seek nor use it.

“ *La fortune frappe à la porte, et l'on n'ouvre pas.* ”

He contrived, however, to answer with a free and disembarrassed air—

“ I am difficult, and ready to refuse you anything, am not I, Kate ? However, our private conference, when you please, fair lady—that is to say,” he added, suddenly, “ after I have had one with my uncle ; for I have got something to ask of him, and must do so immediately after breakfast. So you see, Kate, it will much depend upon his granting or refusing my request whether I am in a good-humour or not.”

“ Oh, pray do grant it then, my dear father,” exclaimed Kate, gaily ; and Sir John replied with a smile, laying strong emphasis on the personal pronouns—

“ I do not think that *I* am likely to refuse *him* anything that *he* will ask. It is a trick that I have still to learn, Kate.”

They sat at table about twenty minutes longer ; and Charles Haldimand thought he remarked that Lord Martindale's face had become somewhat grave, as if he disliked the thought of his private interview with Kate. The suspicion was but one of the shadows of a lover's fancy, however ; for the whole conversation had passed so easily and naturally, that the young nobleman, who had a very fair opinion of his own captivating powers, little feared the existence of any rival. At length Sir John Haldimand rose, saying—

“ Now, Charles, come with me ; and you shall have, yes or no.”

Charles followed, it must be owned, with a beating heart ; for, though he knew his uncle's affection for him well, and had never been refused anything that his own good feelings had permitted him to ask, yet this was a greater boon than all he had previously dreamed of soliciting ; and upon it he felt depended in a great measure the happiness of his future life. Sir John

led the way straight into the library ; and then uncle and nephew stood face to face, with a strong likeness between the old man and the young one, both in feature and expression.

“ Well, Charles, what is it ? ” said Sir John. “ Something mighty important that it requires a private conference.”

“ So important, my dear uncle,” replied Charles, frankly, “ that I will acknowledge my heart has never beat as much in going up to an enemy’s battery. That which I wish to ask you for, is the hand of our dear Kate, if she will consent that it shall be given to me.”

Sir John Haldimand looked a little embarrassed, and paused for a moment or two before he replied. They were very painful moments to his nephew ; but, at length, he answered, with a smile, “ There, don’t be alarmed, Charles ; in such a matter there is much to be considered ; and you speak to me of Kate’s marriage much sooner than I expected.”

“Much sooner, my dear uncle, than I thought of doing so myself,” replied Colonel Haldimand ; “but I spoke to my father and mother upon the subject this morning ; and they both advised me to tell you all my feelings at once, without any hesitation or delay. So I came off directly to do so.”

“Like them, and like you, Charles,” answered his uncle. “Nor will I deny, my boy, that to see you united to Kate will be the fulfilment of one of the dearest wishes of my heart. It would secure your happiness and hers. Yet there is a temporary obstacle, Charles, which must prevent her marrying any man till she is of age.” You know well that, though she calls me father, and I *am* a father to her in heart and spirit, yet she is no child of mine ; I have no right to dispose of her hand ; and there are others who may come forward to claim that right at any time. When she is of age, she can dispose of it herself ; but, in the meantime, we must pause.”

“But, may I not, my dear uncle, may I not, at least, so far plead my own cause with her, as to let her know that I love her, and seek her hand?” demanded Colonel Haldimand. “My profession compels me often to be absent; and if I take no means to win her affection I may lose a precious jewel which can never be regained.”

“To that there can be no possible objection,” answered his uncle at once. “Nay, I think it but right and just both to yourself and her; and from what I see, I think it had better be done as soon as possible.”

“You mean from the conduct of Lord Martindale?” said Charles; “but do you think he has already made any great progress in her regard? When I compare what *I* can offer with what *he* can offer, I cannot but feel that my chance is not a favorable one.”

“Poo, poo,” said Sir John Haldimand “Love is making a fool of you, Charles,

and the wrong way too. You used not to be given to despair of success. But why is your situation so much inferior to that of this young lord ? You have not a title ; but there ends the difference.”

“ But, my dear uncle, I am poor,” replied Charles. “ Richer, indeed, than I believed myself this morning ; for my father tells me that he has generously saved fifteen thousand pounds out of his income to enable me to marry when I pleased. But still, what is that ?”

“ Not enough for you and Kate, certainly, even with your pay, my dear boy,” replied Sir John. “ But then, Charles, I have left Kate sixty thousand pounds in my will, and will give it to her upon her marriage. Neither have I forgotten you. So rest assured that, if you and Kate can agree, and wait patiently for a couple of years till she is of age, you will have quite enough for happiness ; and I, who know her so well, can tell you that she will desire no more. Do not say a word ; but

go away to her and tell her your own tale ;” and taking him by the arm, he walked out of the room with him.

In the drawing-room they found Lord Martindale and his young cousin, Miss Richmond, talking with Kate in the window. Smoothing down all signs of agitation as much as he could, Colonel Haldimand began at once, by saying—
“Now, Kate, for our conference if you are not busy ; for I have promised my father if I did not find you going out upon some expedition, to go down with him to call upon a strange man he has got hold of at Tom Notbeame’s, who seems to have captivated his fancy very much.”

“I am quite ready,” answered Kate.
“So come out into the garden, gallant Colonel, or into the park ; which shall it be ? But first tell me, has Sir John granted your request, and are you in a good humour ?”

An imprudent answer sprang to Charles’s lips ; but he repressed it ; and replied

calmly, "He has partly granted and partly denied, Kate; but nevertheless I am in a very good humour; and so now is the time. Let us go into the park; for it is nearest."

"You are in a hurry," said Kate, opening the glass door and going out. "Well, I won't detain you a minute."

Charles smiled, almost sadly, but followed her down to the terrace; and then, drawing her arm through his, walked on with her to the avenue of trees which has been before described. For a minute or two they were both silent; but then Colonel Haldimand inquired, "Well, dear Kate, what is this important request you have to make? Can you suppose that I would refuse you anything?"

"Oh, it was only," said Kate, with some hesitation, "oh, it was only to ask if you would lend me your black charger to ride over to Burg-loft to-morrow. I have heard you say that he will carry a lady."

"Like a lamb," answered Colonel Haldimand; "and you shall have him, of course. But was that all?"

Kate hesitated again.

“No, not all,” she said, with her voice trembling. “It was, Charles, that you should tell me what was the matter with you all yesterday. You seemed melancholy and uneasy—as I have never seen you before. Sometimes I thought you must be unwell, sometimes that you must have had bad news, sometimes that I must have offended you; and any one of these cases was surely enough to make me unhappy, and long to know what was the matter; for no sister ever loved brother better.”

The assurance had its sweet, and yet its bitter too; and Charles Haldimand paused for an instant ere he answered.

“I did not know that I had shown my uneasiness so foolishly,” he replied. “My mother saw it as well as you; but the cause was neither that I was unwell, nor that I had received bad news—”

He paused for an instant; and then Kate

exclaimed, "Then I must have done something to pain you, Charles."

"No, no, indeed," exclaimed Colonel Haldimand, looking at her with a glance of strong affection. "Never in your life did you do anything to give me pain, Kate; but let me ask you, dear girl, is it possible for me to contemplate the chance of losing you and not feel grief that it is impossible to express. Yes, dear Kate, do not look surprised—I say the chance of losing you; for I cannot see such attentions paid to you as have been offered within the last few days, without contemplating such a chance most sorrowfully."

"What do you mean, Charles?" exclaimed Kate. "Who by?—Lord Martindale? Oh, Charles, no! He surely did not pay me more attention than a gentleman usually pays to a lady; and if he did, surely I gave him no encouragement."

Her face was all glowing as she spoke; but she fixed her beautiful eyes, soft, though

bright, upon Colonel Haldimand's face, as if there was no feeling at the bottom of those deep wells of light that he might not see unshrouded.

"He certainly did pay you more than usual attention, dear girl," replied the young officer; "but I mean not to say that you gave him any encouragement. Indeed I remarked that you refused to sing again, though he asked you."

"I know not why I did so," replied Kate, casting down her eyes and musing. But the next moment she looked up again, saying simply, "I believe it was because I was thinking of you, Charles, and fancied you might be unhappy about something."

"Dear, dear Kate," said Colonel Haldimand, laying his hand upon hers, "it is in your power to make me altogether happy—happy now, happy always."

If his words could be mistaken, his looks could not. The truth seemed to break suddenly on the beautiful girl by his side; and, whether joyful or painful, the

effect was overpowering. There was a seat near, between two trees in the avenue ; and she stretched out her hand towards it, as if she would fain rest there. Colonel Haldimand led her trembling steps thither ; and, sitting down, she pressed her hand upon her heart, keeping her eyes fixed upon the ground, with the colour varying every instant in her cheek. Sometimes it glowed ; and sometimes it was pale ; and sometimes her sweet lips moved, as if she were about to speak ; but yet she remained silent.

“ O, answer me, dear Kate,” said Charles Haldimand, not knowing how to read all he saw. “ I have agitated you, I fear ; yet answer me.”

Kate laid her hand gently upon his, and murmured—“ One moment, Charles, one moment.”

She was trying to quiet the busy tumult of feelings in her heart. The truth had broken upon her so suddenly, as almost to deprive her of the power of thought—

the truth not only of his feelings towards her, but of her feelings towards him. Contented with her fate, happy in her home, loving and beloved by all around her, fancy had never even risen from sleep or dreamed pleasant dreams of the future. Even the delight that she felt in his society, even the anxiety which she felt for his safety and his happiness, even the anxious, trembling fear and hope which agitated her when she heard of battles fought where she knew he must have been present, even the joy and pride which filled her bosom when she learned that he had escaped unhurt and had won honor and renown, had never opened her eyes to the real state of her affection. It seemed all so natural. She had been brought up with him as a sister ; she loved him as a sister ; she took a sister's interest in his fate and happiness ; and she fancied it was nothing more. But now the key of her sensations was given to her ; the door of the prison chamber in her heart, where they had remained so long unknown, was

thrown open to them ; and out they rushed, a joyful, tumultuous crowd, trampling down everything in their way, thought, reflection, memory, foresight, all. She loved, and was beloved. That was all that presented itself to her mind.

Colonel Haldimand paused for a moment or two in some anxiety ; and seeing her eyes still bent upon the ground, he said in a low tone, “ Kate, I beseech you, let me hear my fate at once. You know not how terrible suspense is.”

She turned suddenly towards him with a glowing cheek and a beaming eye. “ Forgive me, Charles, forgive me,” she said. “ I am overpowered ; but I am very, very happy. The thought of giving you happiness is delight indeed.”

Surely that was enough for any man ; but yet lovers, and especially happy lovers, are very exacting. Charles Haldimand would know more, would know all. He could hardly believe, in their full extent, the joyful words he heard.

“Dear, kind Kate!” he exclaimed; “but yet, dear girl, say something more. You told me just now that you loved me as a brother. I must have better love than that, Kate, to make me happy.”

“Be happy then,” said Kate, with her cheek glowing warmly.

“Have you tried your own heart, dear girl?” asked her lover. “Have you inquired of it whether it can be wholly mine, as the bride, as the wife, instead of the sister or the friend?”

“No, no, Charles,” she answered, “I have asked it nothing; but it has told me all—all in one moment. What would you have me say, Charles, that to be yours, to be with you always, to contribute to your happiness, to find mine alone in you, has been a prospect of joy so beyond all my hopes, that I never suffered it to enter into my dreams till you told me that it might be so. It seemed enough to be permitted to love you as a sister; but oh, I too, can feel there is a dearer love than

that. But tell me, Charles," she continued with a sudden start. "Do you know all? Surely you are aware that I am not your uncle's daughter; that I am a mere foundling brought up upon his bounty. Have you spoken to him? have you spoken to your own father?"

"To both, dearest Kate," replied Charles Haldimand; "and it was part of my request to my uncle this morning that I might speak to you as I have now spoken;" and he went on to tell her all.

Gradually, as they conversed, she became more tranquil, and he more firm and reassured. At length, the recollection of how long they had stayed away came back to agitate her; and they returned to the house across the greensward of the park where all eyes could see them from the window. Still she hung upon his arm more tenderly than when she went. She felt that she had something to cling to, and that she needed it. She feared that her appearance would betray her agitation;

and she would fain have gone round to the other side of the house ; but Sir John Haldimand and all his guests were at the window of the drawing-room ; and the appearance of avoiding them might have seemed strange. Summoning courage, then, she approached the door at once ; but Sir John was a skilful tactician ; and, though an old man, he had not forgotten the feelings and emotions of youth. So he covered her retreat shrewdly.

“ Kate, Kate,” he said, opening the door to meet her, “ what careless animals young girls are ! After all the rain of last night you walk across the grass in those thin shoes. Go and change them this moment.”

Kate ran away through the hall ; and glad she was to do so ; for the colour was too bright in her cheek to have passed without observation, had she remained.

“ Well, Charles, have you granted her request ?” demanded the baronet, as he entered the drawing-room with his nephew.

“Oh, yes,” replied Colonel Haldimand in a careless tone. “It was but to ride my black charger to-morrow instead of her own horse, which is too light for such a long distance. You have no objection, I suppose, sir ; for he is quite a lamb compared with that skittish brute she was riding the other day.”

“If you will warrant his temper, Charles,” replied the baronet ; “and I don’t think you would like to have her hurt.”

“He has carried my friend Brown’s wife often,” replied Colonel Haldimand ; “and has no trick or vice in the world ; but to make all sure, I will give him an hour’s gallop after I return from my walk. I shall join you at dinner, if you will give me any.”

“Of course, of course,” replied Sir John. “So now away with you.”

He spoke with a slight smile ; for he read in the gay and beaming expression of his nephew’s countenance that he was happy

at heart ; and he knew right well that Kate would be so likewise.

Lord Martindale was not quite so thoroughly satisfied. He knew not very well why ; but he did not altogether like the length of time which Kate had been absent with her cousin ; and after a few moment's conversation on other matters he whispered a word or two to his mother. Soon after, that lady put Sir John in mind that he had promised to show her the picture gallery ; and he walked away with her for that purpose. Alice Richmond and her noble cousin remained alone in the drawing-room where he looked out of one window in silence, and she out of another. At length Alice drew a deep sigh ; and, with a step so quiet that it made no sound upon the carpet, withdrew from the room.

CHAPTER IX.

IT was about mid-day when Mr. Richard Haldimand and his son set out to walk down to the side of the Mere, a time when fishes often cease from biting, and when the clergyman calculated they were likely to find his new acquaintance at home. Was not Charles Haldimand's step firm and joyful as he walked on by his father's side? People fancy that dissolving views are a new invention; but man's mind has been carrying on the same process from the time of Noah or perhaps before. How dark and gloomy had everything looked when Charles rose that morning! and now one little circumstance in his fate had

dispelled the mists and called forth the sunshine. The face of nature seemed fairer than it had ever appeared before, the song of the spring choristers more sweet ; and happily did he talk of all his future prospects with his kind and gentle-hearted companion as he walked along. Their conversation may be easily imagined, if the reader likes to take the trouble of sitting down to fancy what it was. For my part, I shall land them at once at the gate of Tom Notbeame's garden where the good landlord himself was sitting smoking a long white pipe which had often been smoked before. He was wrapped in one of his meditations, with fancies, very like the smoke, he puffed rolling and twisting before the mind's eye ; but Mr. Richard's voice roused him in a moment ; and, starting up, he knocked the ashes out of his pipe, replying that the gentleman was on the Mere.

Now Mr. Richard Haldimand had only inquired if *his lodger* was at home ; for, to say the truth, though he had come with

the charitable aim of opening the door for a little society to a gentleman who, he thought, must be in woful need of some such consolation, yet Mr. Richard Haldimand had not the least idea of what was the stranger's name.

This formed the subject of his next inquiry ; and Tom Notbeame, touching his hat, replied, " Greenshield, Mr. Richard—a queer name, isn't it, your reverence ?"

" It is a very good old Kentish name," replied Richard Haldimand; and he was proceeding to explain to Tom Notbeame, whose own name, by the way, was exactly in the same predicament as Mr. Greenshield's, that when surnames first began to be used, people adopted them, or were dubbed with them by others, from any little accidental circumstance of birth, habits, profession, or residence, and that probably one of Mr. Greenshield's ancestors, about that time, had been in the custom of carrying a green shield, when the good landlord interrupted him with a deprecatory touch

of the hat, saying, "There he comes, sir. I beg your reverence's pardon. He's pulling in now. He generally comes in about half past twelve, and waits till three before he goes out again. Oh, he knows what he's about. I think he must have been a fish one day himself, he knows all their doings so well. I'll answer for it, he has got some good fish this morning. It took him a good half hour or more to kill one of them."

"We will wait for him then," replied the clergyman; and in a few minutes more, the boat ran up to the edge of the garden.

Mr. Greenshield stepped quietly out, while the man who was in the boat with him threw the fish upon the turf; and Tom Notbeame darting forward, lifted an enormous trout, such as is rarely seen in any English lake or river.

"Ah, old fellow," he exclaimed, apostrophising the fish, "hast thou been caught at last, for all thy cunning tricks? Well, well, I trust my luck may not be like thine."

“Why, you seem to know him, Tom,” said Colonel Haldimand, as his father advanced to Mr. Greenshield.

“Know him! to be sure,” exclaimed Tom Notbeame. “Lord bless you, Colonel, I know him as well as my own father. He and I have sat and looked at each other for hours together many a time, just by the stump of the old oak, there where the river falls into the Mere. Bless my heart, how I have tempted him with everything I could think of—all sorts of flies, and every kind of fish; but no, no, he would not take them—not one of them; and if I teased him too much, he put on his hat and walked away.”

In the meantime salutations had passed between the clergyman and the angler; and Mr. Haldimand, turning round, introduced his son. The commencements of all conversations are stupid. Even intimate friends generally begin with something insipid as a sort of stepping-stone to cross the brook and get upon common ground.

The merit of a man is very often discoverable by the rapidity with which he gets out of common places into matters of more interest. Mr. Greenshield did so very rapidly, though of course the conference began with a disquisition about the weather.

“A very fine day after a bad night,” said the clergyman, as they turned towards the house at their companion’s invitation.

“A delightful night for a fisherman, my dear sir,” replied Mr. Greenshield—“full of glorious promise for the morrow’s sport. We need no wine to cheer us when we hear the thick rain dropping as we sit over the evening meal. If Horace had been an angler, we should never have had some of his best lines—

‘*Horrida tempestas cœlum contraxit, et imbres*

*Nivesque deducunt Jovem; nunc mare, nunc siluæ
Threïcio aquilone sonant; rapiamus, amici,*

*Occasionem de die; dumque virent genua,
Et decet, obductâ solvatur fronte senectus.*

Tu vina Torquato move Consule pressa meo.’

Though the *nives*, and Boreas also, might be spared by an angler ; for there is an old saying ‘ When water is cold, fish will not bite.’ ”

“ I am afraid Horace was given to less innocent amusements,” replied Mr. Haldimand. “ It is a curious thing that amongst all their sects of philosophers, having a multitude of wise men, and a great many good men amongst them, neither Romans nor Greeks ever found out in what true happiness consists. Socrates, Plato, and Cicero, perhaps, came nearer it than any others ; but it is clear that they could not frame a system of morals for themselves without the aid of revelation.”

“ I am afraid,” replied Mr. Greenshield, “ many others long since, with all the aid of revelation, are as far off as ever—the French for instance, who have no notion whatever of what morality is.—I must ask you into what is merely the common parlour of this little inn, for I tenant but one chamber ; what is called a private sitting-

room, being, I imagine, unknown ; but yet it is a very pleasant abode ; and a man may be happier here, perhaps, than in the midst of splendour.” .

Thus saying, he ushered them into the room he mentioned which was tacitly reserved for his own private uses while he was there ; and the conversation flowed on in the same quiet and easy manner. Colonel Haldimand, who had little expected to meet such a person, knowing that his father was one of those most blessed of all creatures, a man easily pleased, was struck and surprised both at the highly polished manners and extensive information of their new acquaintance. His profession had called him into many countries ; and he had seen much of men and manners ; but he found that every place he had visited, and a multitude of others far beyond the usual range of pleasure-travellers, were as familiar to Mr. Greenshield as if they had been his home ; and at the same time the observations he had made, and the reflec-

tions to which they had given rise, were not only shrewd and profound, but so arranged and classified as always to be available in a moment.

After spending nearly three quarters of an hour with him in very agreeable conversation, Mr. Richard Haldimand turned to the object of his visit.

“ I am very sorry, Mr. Greenshield,” he said, “ that I had not the good fortune to make your acquaintance before, in order to show you any little attention in my power. Not, indeed, that any effort could render Haldistow a very lively or amusing place, though it may be an interesting one ; but yet a little society of any kind may in some degree break its monotony for you. One of my objects in calling upon you to-day was to ask if you would give me up an evening when I might have the pleasure of your company at dinner.”

“ I cannot plead many engagements,” answered Mr. Greenshield, with a faint smile, “ but I really very rarely go into society, and—”

“Nay, nay,” answered the worthy rector, “I really will take no denial, and will only permit you to say when it shall be. In the words of the poet you have just quoted,

“ ‘ Quando repostum Cœcubum ad festas dapes,

* * * * * *

Tecum sub altâ, sic Jovi gratum, domo,
Beate Mæcenâs bibam ?

Though, let me add, mine is by no means a magnificent abode, as doubtless you are well aware. However, I trust my brother, Sir John, will be able to join us ; and his cheerful spirit, and bright, well stored mind, gives sunshine wherever he comes.”

“ Well, my dear sir, when you please,” replied Mr. Greenshield. “ On next Tuesday, if you like, I will be with you.”

“ That will just do,” replied Mr. Haldimand ; “ for to-morrow, Saturday, all the party from the hall are going over to see a

curious old house, some part of which they say was built by the Saxons. Sunday, being somewhat rigid in my notions, I never receive any one ; and on Monday the party at the hall are going away, and doubtless my brother will escort them along some part of the road. It is a good old custom which he keeps up with all friends who are dear to him. So I shall expect you on Tuesday at five o'clock. I am obliged to make my dinner hour rather late for I have frequently as much to do as I can well get into the time."

"I will not fail," replied Mr. Greenshield ; "but, may I ask what is the name of this old house ? for I have dabbled a little in antiquities myself."

"It is called Burg-loft," replied Colonel Haldimand, "a name of which we have not been able to discover the origin."

"Does it stand high ?" asked Mr. Greenshield.

"Yes," replied the young officer, "upon the top of a very curious crag, which starts

up abruptly, and commands a view of the whole country round."

"Then, probably, the name is derived from the German," observed Mr. Greenshield.

"So it has been supposed," replied Colonel Haldimand, "or, at least, from the Saxon, *burg* signifying an old town or castle, I believe. So that they say it means, Lofty Castle."

"But *luft* means the open air, the sky, the heaven, in modern German, at least," said Mr. Greenshield; "and the interpretation, therefore, may be Air Castle, or Castle Airy. All the German nations are fond of giving their abodes rather fanciful names associated with some circumstance of their condition. We see traces of it, even in our own country, in the names of both counties and towns, wherever the Saxons have not adopted more ancient terms; but I must not enter into a disquisition which might lead us afar."

"Well, then, my dear sir, I shall trust

to carry it on for you another time when this young soldier is out of the way," said Mr. Haldimand, rising. Shaking Mr. Greenshield by the hand, the two visitors took their leave and retired.

CHAPTER X.

MATTHEW HUSH glided about Haldistow Hall as quietly as a cat. He seemed to be shod with felt. Whether long practice had made him perfect, or that some peculiar enchantment, proceeding from the tips of his fingers and the soles of his feet, rendered everything silent when he touched it, certain it is, that neither vaulted stone passage, nor marble hall, nor hard oak floor, seemed to return any sound to his footfall ; and even the handles of doors and the pivots of hinges, which had acquired, by prescription beyond the memory of man, the right of rattling and creaking, seemed to

yield to his fascinating influence without cry or resistance.

This was assuredly an admirable quality in the eyes of good Mrs. Giles, the house-keeper, who had a great dislike to noise of any kind. That worthy lady had now become, as the reader may imagine, an old woman. Still she was almost as active as ever, and boasted that she had not known an hour's ill-health for thirty years. Her intellect was as perfect, and most of her corporeal senses were as sharp as they had been at the age of forty. Her hearing was even more acute, though her eyesight, she was forced to admit, had a little failed : that is to say, she used spectacles to thread a fine needle and read small print ; but upon other occasions, she did very well without. The greatest ravages that time had made were apparent about the mouth ; not that the persevering enemy of mortal strength had taken the stones from the mill ; for, on the contrary, her teeth were very good ; but those in front, which had

always been very large and somewhat horse-shaped, were now larger and more prominent than ever, and had got a certain straggling look about them, leaning a little away from each other, like a party of gentleman slightly intoxicated who find a difficulty in walking arm in arm. To hide this, she had got into a habit of drawing the upper lip, which was somewhat long naturally, as far as possible, over the front teeth, adding greatly, to a certain natural primness of countenance, and rendering it somewhat difficult to smile. Heaven bless the old woman ! We all have our little vanities, and why not she ?

Mrs. Giles was not at all pleased at the introduction of Matthew Hush into the house, in the quality of butler. She recollected Matthew Hush a very naughty boy, fond of stealing fruit and breaking down fences, with no application to any thing good, and very little reverence for housekeepers. She recollected him, moreover, a somewhat disreputable lad, asso-

ciated with poachers, and smugglers, and deerstealers, the offences of which last-named body, Mrs. Giles, having a veneration for venison, would hardly have forgiven if they had written all the plays of Shakespeare, with those of Beaumont and Fletcher to boot. But more than all this, Mrs. Giles recollected the father of Matthew Hush, and how he had behaved most ungratefully and scandalously to Sir John, "who had been the making of him," voting against him at an election, and canvassing for the opposite party, even in Haldistow itself, "under Sir John's very nose." His mother, indeed, she was forced to admit, had been a very good sort of woman ; but still she fixed all her thoughts upon the father, and often repeated a proverb which we got from the Greeks, "Bad the crow and bad the egg."

Such was not very favourable ground to work upon ; but yet Matthew Hush took a sort of pride in overcoming prejudices against him ; and he calculated confidently

upon twisting good Mrs. Giles round his finger.

Accordingly, one morning, as soon as he was shaved, dressed, and decorated, he proceeded to the housekeeper's room, and tapped quietly at the door.

"Come in," said Mrs. Giles, thinking that it was the still-room maid, from the silence of her approach; and Mr. Hush entered at once. The old lady looked up at him from a book of choice receipts that she was perusing, and by the aid of which she contrived to place Sir John Haldimand's table half a century behind the tables of the capital; and when she saw who it was, she drew her upper lip still farther over her front teeth, resolved to give the butler no encouragement to trouble her often, without, however, showing him any discourtesy.

"Good morning, madam," said Mr. Hush, with a very reverential tone. "I took the liberty of intruding, to inquire if you have any commands for me this morn-

ing, that you might not have the trouble of sending, in case anything should be wanting in my department."

"No, I thank you, Mr. Hush," replied the housekeeper, somewhat drily; and she looked at her book again.

"I have no right to ask any favours of you, Mrs. Giles," said Matthew Hush, who was a man not easily rebuffed; "but it would put me under a great obligation, if at any time you would give me a hint in regard to Sir John's wishes and customs; for, having had the good fortune to regain his good opinion, after most justly losing it, I am most anxious to retain it by every means in my power."

"I am glad to hear it, Mr. Hush," replied Mrs. Giles, not a bit mollified. "I suppose you know your business in the place which you have undertaken; and I cannot say that I see anything else is required but to perform that properly. Sir John is a very easy man to please when people do their duty."

“Oh, every gentleman has his own particular ways,” replied Matthew Hush; “and I should think—nay, I may say, hope—that Sir John’s ways are somewhat different from those of my late master, Mr. William Haldimand.”

The cunning villain had calculated and weighed every word to a hair. He had seen every thought which was passing in Mrs. Giles’s mind while he spoke. He had heard her clearly say to herself, though she uttered not a word of the kind aloud, “Fine words butter no parsnips;” and therefore he determined to open his attack upon another angle of the fortification. From everything he knew, had heard, seen or read of that peculiar branch of society, which may be called the servant-world, he was led to believe that there was no person existing in it who would think it at all wrong in another to speak ill of his late master; and in Mrs. Giles’s case, whose devoted attachment to Sir John was well known, he judged that insinuations against his brother

which would have been most offensive to the baronet, would be rather pleasant than otherwise to the housekeeper, who looked upon Mr. William Haldimand as a sort of personal enemy of her master. He had some knowledge of the fair sex too ; and he concluded that her curiosity would be somewhat excited by the hint he threw out, and thus a new course of communication would be established between him and her.

“ I am sure I don't know what Mr. William Haldimand's ways are,” said Mrs. Giles bridling. “ I cannot say I think he has behaved well in any way to his brother ; but as to his private ways, I know nothing about them.”

“ His private and public ways are much alike, Mrs. Giles,” replied Matthew Hush, seeing that so far his aim was attained, and judging that it might be as well to stimulate curiosity a little farther. “ However, it does not become me to say a word against him. He was a kind master to me ; and I owe him a great deal, though

I owed far more, I must confess, to my lady and poor Miss Emily. Before her death, when I was a wild reprobate sort of lad, Mrs. Haldimand had me instructed and gave me quite a new view of things—I may say that she was my salvation. But it would take too much time to tell you all about that, Mrs. Giles ; and I see that you are busy ; and therefore I'll only say that you really will oblige me very much if you would tell me anything to do that you think may give Sir John satisfaction. Good morning, ma'am ;” and Mr. Hush turned towards the door.

Before it was quite closed behind him, however, the voice of Mrs. Giles was heard exclaiming—

“ Mr. Hush, Mr. Hush, won't you come and take tea with me to-night ?”

“ I am afraid I can't, ma'am,” replied Mr. Hush, “ for dinner will be later to-day ; and I like to see all the wine that remains put carefully by, and to count the plate, and put it in a safe place. The head footman tells me Mr. Lewellyn used to leave

all that till the next morning ; and perhaps it may not be so necessary in the country ; but it is a habit I got in London, where none of the servants are much to be depended upon ; and I think it is a very good rule."

"Certainly, certainly," replied Mrs. Giles, in whose opinion Matthew Hush was undoubtedly rising, whether she would or not. "Let it be to-morrow then, Mr. Hush. Sir John always dines half an hour earlier on Sunday. So you will be able to get away in time."

The butler promised, and retiring from the awful house-keeperian province, closed the door behind him. A slight smile passed over his countenance as he did so, such as a skilful general might display when, having entirely changed his system of tactics in presence of a fresh adversary, he found that he was gaining equal advantages by slow and cautious manœuvres with those which he had previously gained by bold and daring strokes.

By this time the breakfast hour was approaching ; and Mr. Hush betook himself to the room, where that meal was to be taken, with the same silent step which I have mentioned. For a moment or two he went about his professional avocations, moving some chairs and tables, and making other arrangements ; but presently he heard the sound of voices in the drawing-room which was contiguous, and being not unwilling on any occasion to overhear what other people were saying, he approached the door between the two rooms. Now that door was a double door ; and though Mr. Hush was well aware that the one next himself would open under his hand without making any noise, he reflected that the one on the drawing-room side might be open or might be shaken by the draught of wind as he pulled back the other. He was a very considerate man. He always considered everything ; and therefore he pushed back the shield which covered the keyhole to see if any light

would shine through. No light came ; but then he remembered that the door might be ajar ; and he rather thought it was so from the clearness with which he heard the sounds. Laying his hand then upon the lock steadily and slowly so as not to shake it in the least, he turned the handle in the same manner ; and then, with such gentleness as almost to render the movement imperceptible, drew the door towards him, having an excuse ready for going into the drawing-room if he should be detected. The inner door was, as he supposed, ajar ; and he left the outer door in the same condition, taking care to remain close to the aperture.

The voices he now heard were those of Lady Martindale and her son ; and when he perceived this to be the case Mr. Hush was on the point of moving away, not conceiving it likely that their conversation could have any interest for him. Information is always useful however ; and habit, nature, and philosophy induced him to remain for a moment longer.

“Trust to me, trust to me, my dear Arthur,” said the voice of Lady Martindale, “and follow my advice. Go no farther in this business at present. Let us get away from this place on Monday, and in the meantime do not alter towards her at all, but do not take any step in advance. If she were to be the heiress of Haldistow, that might obviate all the many objections which exist.”

How Matthew Hush pricked up his ears!

“But Sir John himself told me,” continued the lady, “that he had left her sixty thousand pounds in his will. Now that is nothing, you know.”

“But, my dear mother,” replied Lord Martindale, “there are some other things to be considered besides money ; and sixty thousand pounds is certainly a very handsome fortune.”

“Would it not be better that she should have Haldistow too ?” asked Lady Martindale, impressively ; “and if I can bring it about, will not that be conferring a great

favour upon *her* as well as benefiting *you*? Now I think I can do this, Arthur; for you see how he dotes upon her; and by touching his pride a little, I think it can be accomplished. You must not appear in the business, however, at all. You are to be nothing but the lover. Leave the business part to me; and I do not fear to bring it about. As soon as we get home, I will write to him, so as to take care that nobody else steps in."

"Ay, 'tis that which I fear," replied Lord Martindale.

"Well, we are losing nothing in the mean time," said Lady Martindale; "and four and twenty hours will bring him my letter. I went as far as I could yesterday evening without saying anything decided. How I do wish I could see the will, and find out whether he has actually disposed of Ha!distow!"

"So do I," thought Matthew Hush; but at all events he was one step in advance; and somebody else coming into the drawing-room, the conversation ceased.

Matthew Hush set about the preparations for breakfast, diligently, and waited, all attention, on the guests. One would have imagined that every thought of his mind was engaged in the duties of his office ; and so indeed it was. Not that he undervalued the importance of the information he had accidentally obtained ; far from it. But, as we have seen, Matthew was a most considerate person. He had very few great emotions—seldom anything like hesitation. In the present instance, he did not, as some ordinary rogues might have done, say to himself first, “I will write the intelligence to Mr. William Haldimand,” and then, “no, I will not.” He only asked himself—“Shall I tell him or not ?” and the answer was—“I will consider of it after breakfast.”

He did accordingly proceed to the important consideration as soon as, in carriages and on horseback, the whole party had set out for Burg-loft. He then placed his hat on his head, his hands behind his

back, and strolled out into the park. There he turned the question round and round, and looked at it on every side.

“If I let Mr. William Haldimand know what I have ascertained,” he said, internally, “it will prove I have diligently obeyed his orders. I may also attribute to my own skill what was merely the effect of accident ; and make a merit of a discovery which has cost me no trouble but turning the handle of a door. But what shall I get by it ? Nothing. He will consider it only as the cancelling of an old debt, not an obligation. He has no opinion of gratitude ; not he. It is all traffic in this world. So I must make the best use of my goods. I must keep them till I can take them to a good market. I must hold my secret myself till I can turn it to some advantage, or till he forces me to tell it. Who knows, if I were to tell it to him now, whether he would not think that, having done all he wanted, he might just as well hang me to-morrow ? No, no, Mr. Haldi-

mand, I will have some hold upon you first ; and I think I shall be able to get one."

The cogitations of Matthew Hush lasted somewhat longer, for, to say sooth, they occupied more than an hour ; but such as I have stated was the course of his reasoning ; and when he had satisfied himself that he had left no branch of the subject unconsidered, he walked back to the Hall at a brisk pace.

CHAPTER XI.

THE expedition to Burg-Loft was a pleasant expedition. The day turned out to be beautiful. There are certain days, as the reader well knows, which seem to prompt excursions, when everything appears travelling, or inclined to travel—when the clouds are seen hurrying over the sky, as if hunting some vaporous stag through the air—when the winds cry out “Halloo ! Go along !” and the sunshine and the shadow chase each other, like greyhounds, over the hills, and the arms of the trees point their long fingers on the way we ought to go ; and the swallows skim, and the butterflies flutter, and the rook wends

his way straightly and steadily across the sky like an old citizen walking to Change. Those are the days for getting into the saddle, or into the open carriage, and dashing along over hill and dale, seeing a thousand bright things flit by, awakening momentary delights, and then giving place to others, like sweet touches of melody running through some light and sparkling piece of music, where the notes give a thrill, and are lost in the other thrilling sounds that succeed.

Such was the day, when Sir John Haldimand and his party set out for Burg-Loft. The baronet himself, Lady Martindale and her fair niece in an open barouche, and Colonel Haldimand, Kate, and Lord Martindale on horseback. The latter concatenation might in some degree have been disagreeable, from the peculiar circumstances of the parties; but rivalry is a great touch-stone of character, and often discovers the gold, often the baser metal. Now, during the course of one day, it had

not had a very favourable effect upon Colonel Haldimand, the reader perhaps may say; but the feelings which on that occasion he experienced were not exactly those of rivalry. They were more those of despair; and despair is always evil, and produces evil. The case was very different now. He had regained hope and confidence; and on Lord Martindale's part, there was no want of confidence in his own powers either.

It is but justice to him to say, however, that even if he had perceived that Colonel Haldimand was a lover of Kate, which he did *not* perceive, he would not have suffered that circumstance to render him less courteous and attentive. First, he would not much have feared to enter the lists for a fair lady's favour with any man; secondly, he knew right well that ill-humour is not the way to win love; and thirdly, although he had his faults, he was both by nature and habit courteous and kindly.

The ride passed very pleasantly then, with all the exhilaration of rapid exercise. Kate rode Colonel Haldimand's charger beautifully and gracefully; and the fine horse under her hand was as docile as a dog. Both gentlemen talked gaily to her as they went; not much to each other, it is true; but whatever they did say was perfectly civil and good-humoured; and she, with her bright eyes glittering through the long dark lashes, and her colour raised by the air and exercise, and her lips smiling with each moment's enjoyment, and her whole face beaming, not only with the happy heart, but with the light of first early love—she was certainly as charming a creature as the eye could rest on, and might well represent the last crowning work of creation.

On they went gaily, rapidly, taking advantage of every green slope or vacant turfy space by the road-side to canter their horses, riding them slowly down hill, but galloping them wherever they found a

good flat piece of common. The commons however grew more scanty ; for the road led them more and more into the interior of the country, where cultivation was richer and lanes and hedge-rows plenty. Colonel Haldimand knew every step of the way, however, and for many a mile on either side of the road, so that he could take advantage of every facility for galloping that the country afforded, and would cut off an angle here or save a mile there, always taking care to choose his path so as to bring out the beauties of the country to the eyes which he wished to enjoy them.

From time to time they stopped to gaze ; but still the rapid rate at which they went, and the shorter path they took, brought them to the little inn at the foot of Burg-hill, some time before the party in the carriage. Thus, when Sir John and Lady Martindale arrived, the horses were already in the stable ; and Kate, dismounted, was standing with her riding whip in her hand, the train of her habit cast over her arm,

and the tiny little foot just appearing from below the edge. She was not the least like Diana in the world ; but I very much doubt whether the huntress-goddess was half as beautiful as she was—at least I know that none of those who lived in Diana's own day, and ought to have known most about her, ever represented her in marble half so lovely as Kate stood there in something much better than the purest Parian or Pentelicon either.

Lady Martindale looked at her while getting out of the carriage with a critical eye, and made her own comments internally. Now Lady Martindale was a woman of the world, and was considered a great judge in matters of taste. She was full of conventionalities, though a person of very shrewd sense, which she only employed, it is true, in dealing with those conventionalities to the best advantage. A builder must have bricks, or stones, or something to build with ; and if he be a good builder he may erect a very tolerable

house even with bad materials. But still he must have bricks ; and those are generally supplied to him by others. Now conventionalities were Lady Martindale's bricks ; and her mind being the builder, everything that it raised was constructed of them. It is a pity that the bricks were not better ; but they had been supplied to her by others : and so she was not altogether responsible.

She looked at Kate, then, with a critical eye, as she would have looked at a piece of furniture for her son's house. She asked herself, in short, how she would do for Lady Martindale ; and she could not help acknowledging that she would do very well.

First, she was exceedingly beautiful. That was a great thing in society. Then she was exceedingly graceful. That was still more. Then there was nothing the least exaggerated about her. In manner and in conversation Lady Martindale had never been able to discover the least touch of romance, or sentimentality, or even en-

thusiasm ; and although nothing, it is true, had occurred to call forth any of these characteristics, Lady Martindale, trusting greatly in her own shrewdness, thought she must have discovered them had they existed. Then demeanour was an enormous point with Lady Martindale. She judged people as much by their attitude as by anything else ; and as Kate stood there with her drapery gathered round her, her riding-whip held lightly and dropping gracefully, one foot and ankle slightly advanced so as just to be seen somewhat shaded, and the weight of the figure thrown a little on one side so as to vary the outline, and to bring the contour into the most graceful point of view, Lady Martindale admitted that it was perfect, and internally declared that she could not have done it better if she had been taught by Parisot.

Poor Kate did not in the least know that she was doing anything at all.

All Lady Martindale's considerations and

reflections, though they were many, occupied no more time than was necessary for the carriage door to be opened, the steps to be let down, and her ladyship to descend. Then immediately advancing to Kate, she brushed back a stray lock of hair which the wind had blown over her forehead, saying, "My dear Kate, you look lovely."

Kate had nearly forfeited for ever her high place in Lady Martindale's esteem by blushing like a milk-maid; but she could not help it; for the eyes of both Charles Haldimand and Lord Martindale were upon her at the moment; and both seemed to say that Lady Martindale was very right. The blush, however, was so lovely that even her ladyship could hardly wish it had been spared.

"The carriage can go no farther, dear Lady Martindale," said Sir John, seeing her look up towards the hill; "but if you think the walk will be too much for you, saddle-donkeys are to be procured here for the ascent."

“But it is so steep,” said Lady Martindale.

“Nay, nay,” said the old baronet, “we shall not require you to walk or ride either up the wall of a house. There is a path which winds round the hill so that the ascent is hardly felt.”

Lady Martindale preferred to walk under these circumstances; and the ascent began. A broad sandy path commencing about a hundred yards from the inn, wound round and round the hill taking advantage of the tops of all the craggy banks which occasionally formed, on one side at least, a natural terrace for it. Seats had been placed at various distances along the road, and everything done for the accommodation of the visitor; for Burg-loft was an object of interest to all the county, and a place of pilgrimage from a large town some ten miles off; so that the good people of the inn found it worth their while to render the ascent as easy and comfortable as possible. Nevertheless the walk was somewhat long;

for the castle was seated on a very high point. What seemed a little copse of scattered bushes when you stood at the foot, proved to be a wood of tall trees when you approached the top; and through this wood the road was carried till one reached the old portal of the castle, which had suffered less from decay than any other part of the building. Nevertheless, Lady Martindale was very tired. She sat down once; she sat down twice; she sat down three times. Whatever nature had intended her for, the habits of fashionable life had long deprived her of the faculty of climbing hills with satisfaction. To her, therefore, the expedition, from the moment that the foot of Burg-hill was reached, became what in vulgar parlance is called a bore. The others enjoyed the walk much, paused here and paused there to view the ever-growing beauties of the prospect round, which I must not pause to describe, and seemed hardly to feel that they were climbing. Lord Martindale offered his arm to Kate;

but she declined to take it, with a gay boast of her strength and activity. But Lady Martindale pulled heavily upon Sir John's arm the whole way up, and, seating herself on a long fallen mass of the old masonry, declared she was quite exhausted. The baronet was all courtesy, though he smiled a little at the excellent lady's delicacy.

"Well, dear Lady Martindale," he observed, "I have a capital plan in my head. Instead of going to the inn for luncheon we will have it brought up here. Asses and panniers will soon furnish us wherewithal to refresh ourselves and re-invigorate you for our descent."

"But who will you send?" asked Lady Martindale.

"Oh, Charles will go," exclaimed Sir John. "Here, Charles, Charles, I wish you would run down, my dear boy, and tell the people of the inn to send up here the luncheon I ordered. We will have it in the great court. Many people do."

Now Charles was at this time enjoying the pleasantest moment he had had during the day. Lord Martindale had gone into one of the old arched door-ways and was looking out thence upon the view. Fair Alice Richmond was standing by him, looking out too ; and the opportunity of a few dear private words with Kate was afforded which Colonel Haldimand did not neglect. At his uncle's voice, however, he instantly went to the gate, received his commission, and hurried down by a shorter and steeper path to execute it. Kate turned to look after him. Lord Martindale turned to look at her ; and, seeing her alone, instantly left the place where he was standing to join her. As he hurried on he heard a deep sigh, and looking round saw his fair cousin with her eyes bent on the ground and her cheek very pale. He asked himself what could be the matter with her ; but he did not stop to ask her. Kate, however, the moment he joined her, walked to the doorway where Alice was standing,

and linking her arm in hers gazed out upon the view.

Sir John and Lady Martindale joined them the moment after ; and the latter putting her head out, exclaimed,

“ Well, it is a beautiful scene indeed ! What a world of hill and dale and plain and wood. It is worth ascending that terrible hill to see it.—Dear me, there is somebody coming up that hill on horseback ! Surely Colonel Haldimand cannot have got down to the bottom of the hill already and be coming up again.”

“ No, no,” said Sir John. “ Charles would never gallop his horse up in that reckless way without cause or necessity. He is too old a soldier, lady, to risk breaking a poor beast’s wind with no object.”

“ He seems a gentleman,” said Lady Martindale, as the new comer passed along the turn of the road directly under the part of the walls where they stood. “ I wonder who he can be ?”

“ Oh, some stranger,” replied Sir John.

“ We are not the only ones who visit Burg-loft. Now dear lady, what do you say ? Have you recovered breath to climb the tower ? The staircase is sound and even ; but it has ninety-three steps, I grieve to say.”

“ Mercy, mercy ! Sir John,” cried Lady Martindale, laughing. “ Really before I climb another mountain, I must have a little repose, if not a little refreshment. But pray do not let me stop anybody else ; for it is not fair that my infirmity should bar their enjoyment.”

While she was speaking, the sound of a horse’s hoofs was heard at the great gateway ; and, the moment, after a very gentlemanly young man, dressed in a travelling suit of the day, entered the courtyard, and gazed about him. As soon as he perceived the party which it contained, he approached with an easy nonchalant air, and, pulling off his hat, bowed with formal courtesy to the ladies of the party, then performed the same ceremony towards Sir John and Lord

Martindale ; and addressing the former, he said,

“ A magnificent ruin, this, sir. I perceive vestiges of every age of architecture from the Saxon period down to Henry, the wife-slayer. I suppose its history is buried in oblivion, or, what is still worse, swallowed up in the sweet quick-sand of tradition.”

Sir John Haldimand, who had returned his bow with formal courtesy, replied,

“ Of course, sir, it has its tradition ; for people where they cannot find a history ready made, are always sure to *make* one, and when they do find one are sure to embellish it.”

“ May I ask, then,” said the stranger, in the same sort of light and easy tone, “ if the devil, Oliver Cromwell, or Julius Cæsar have had anything to do with this castle ? I have seldom, if ever, known an old military building in which one or the other of them had not some share in putting it up or knocking it down.”

The whole party smiled ; and Sir John replied,

“ Oliver, sir, Oliver was the person in this case. If we are to believe the accredited story, he left it in the state in which we now find it, though, to tell the truth, I do not believe he ever saw it in his life ; and if he battered it down with cannon balls, as the people tell us, where he put his cannon, I do not know ; for there is no spot of height sufficient within range of the castle.”

“ Perhaps, sir, he made a mountain for the purpose, and took it away when he went,” replied the other. “ But I fear I am interrupting you ;” and turning towards the high tower, or keep of the castle, he ran lightly up the stairs, and soon appeared upon the battlements at the top.

In the meantime speculations were going on below as to his station and character.

“ Who can he be ?” said Lady Martindale ; “ a very dry and amusing person ; and his face is quite familiar to me.”

“ I have seen him several times at court,” said Lord Martindale ; “ but I do not know his name. I think he is one of the Marquis of Rockingham’s set.”

“ We bumpkins who only present ourselves at court once in five or six years,” said Sir John Haldimand, “ cannot be expected to remember all the faces of you courtly people. Nevertheless, his face seems in some degree familiar to me too. As he seems to amuse you, Lady Martindale, shall I ask him to join us at luncheon?”

“ O, pray do, Sir John,” replied the lady. “ I think he will amuse us very much, if we can bring him out ; for he seems one of the oddest men that ever lived.”

“ O, no, my dear mother, there are a great many like him,” said Lord Martindale. “ A quaint sort of superciliousness is quite the mode now. However, I will go up and join him in the tower, and bring him back to you.”

“ Ask him, then, to luncheon, Martindale,” said the baronet ; and the young nobleman disappeared up the stairs.

It would appear that he had considerable difficulty in finding the object of his search, who ran from one part of the building to another with extraordinary rapidity, appearing now here, now there, upon the walls, and knocking off the tops of wall-flowers and other high-perching plants, as he went, with a small cane which he carried in his hand, as if he were only seeking to dissipate an idle hour. At length, however, he was caught ; and walking on more slowly with Lord Martindale, made a complete circuit round the walls, and then descended towards the rest of the party, who were endeavouring to make out a more than half effaced inscription on a broad stone over the principal door of the keep.

“ Very happy to have the honour of lunching with you, sir,” he said, advancing to Sir John Haldimand. “ I have learned

from my excellent papa, who is a wise man in his generation, never to refuse a good thing when it is offered. Now, for a man who has travelled five-and-twenty miles in the profound solitude of a hack post-chaise, and cantered up a hill with the only companionship of an inn horse, luncheon of any kind is a very good and desirable thing ; and more especially when it is seasoned and garnished, as cooks would say, with the spice of agreeable society and the flowers of beauty." And he bowed all round with a sort of mocking smile, as if he was half laughing at, and half with, his companions.

His dry merriment was somewhat infectious. Even Sir John caught it ; so that when Colonel Haldimand rejoined them the next moment, he found the whole party laughing. To the surprise of all, however, he held out his hand to their new companion, exclaiming—

" Ah, Harry, what has brought you out of the gay world in April ?"

The other gave a sort of affected theatrical start, and then opening his arms, embraced Colonel Haldimand after the French fashion, saying—

“My dear Charles, this is an unexpected pleasure. I thought you were gone to India, or to some other place equally, or even more potently, hot. As to what brought me out of London at this season of the year, that is soon explained. My papa would tell you, dear man, that it was the influence of the goddess which rules all my actions, Caprice. But I can assure you, that lady had nothing to do with it, though I have a great respect for her, and generally do whatever she tells me. The case was this : I lost a bet of three hundred pounds to Lord George Sackville—you know Sackey, don’t you, Charles ?”

“Oh, yes, I know him,” answered Colonel Haldimand, with a nod.

“Well, by dint of eloquence and vigour,” continued the other, “I got five hundred pounds out of my beloved parent. True,

it was like digging out a crocodile's teeth with a turnscrew ; but I got it, and with it a warning not to come again for more for I don't know how long. Well, I went away to Sackey's, paid him the money ; and as we had nothing to do, no cards in the house, nor any spotted cubes, Sackey proposed that we should draw horse-hairs out of the chair cushions—fifty guineas on the longest hair. As this is quite as good as any other sporting amusement, I of course assented at once. Fortune favored me ; and I not only won back my three hundred pounds, but two hundred more, drawing, by the will of the fickle goddess, the ten longest hairs that ever sprouted on an equine tail. Sackey saw that he was not in luck, so he would not go on ; and when I came away enriched, I bethought myself, for the first time in my life, of what I should do with my time and my money. Now, I knew that if I staid in London, I should inevitably waste both ; and I was seized with certain yearnings of the stomach—which

people often mistakenly call the heart—to set eyes upon some of my kindred whom I have not seen since I was a curly-headed boy. I therefore made my valet pack up my portmanteau—gave him leave of absence, as I did not want to be worried to death with being looked after—told him to tell papa when he came home, that I was gone into the country to fight a duel—which you see was considerate, as I knew he would want some mental excitement during my long absence—and then, putting myself into a hack P. C., travelled down here by short and slow stages ; stopping whenever I found anything was to be seen, whether it was a church steeple, an old castle, a rock, a spring, a river or a lake ; till, at length, I reached the foot of this hill, and determined instantly to take it in and write a picturesque tour through the western counties, with notes antiquarian, philosophical, philological and statistical.”

“ Well, I trust, Harry,” said Colonel,

Haldimand, "that the relations you wanted to get a glance of, are those you see around you."

"I have for some time had an idea," replied the other gentleman, "that I was in the society of Sir John Haldimand; but I did not know how my enchanting uncle might be affected by the apparition of his virtuous and amiable nephew unless the sad fact of his bodily appearance at Burg-loft were broken to him with proper gentleness and delicacy."

Sir John Haldimand gazed at him from head to foot with a good-humoured smile, then shook him by the hand, saying :

"Harry, my dear boy, I am very glad to see you. I certainly never should have discovered the curly-headed boy, not higher than my walking stick, in the tall man perfumed and belaced. But you are welcome notwithstanding. Let me introduce you to Lady Martindale, Miss Richmond, Lord Martindale."

"And this," said Harry Haldimand, after

having paid due reverence to the other introductions, "this is the lovely Kate of whom I have heard so much. Well may certain people be afraid of the influence of those bright eyes." And taking her hand gallantly, he pressed his lips upon it.

"Come, come," said Sir John Haldimand, laughing, "no courtly grimaces here, master Harry. We are all very glad to see you. You, I will not doubt, are glad to see us; and there are other relations not many miles distant whom you will be well pleased to see also."

"You mean my uncle Richard," said Henry Haldimand. "Glad indeed shall I be to see him, or any other relation; although the one, the best, and best beloved—" and his brow grew very dark and sad—"I shall never see again."

"I think the luncheon must be coming up," said Sir John, suddenly turning the conversation. Looking out down the road, he perceived a couple of heavily-laden donkeys wending slowly up the hill,

under earnest solicitations applied to their backs by a waiter and a professional donkey-drubber. The meal was soon spread out upon the grass ; and everything passed cheerfully.

When all was over, the castle visited throughout all its holes and corners, and the party walking down the hill, Sir John turned frankly to his nephew, saying :

“ Of course, Harry, you will go on with us to the hall.”

“ No, mine uncle,” replied the young man. “ I must consider in some little degree the prejudices of my sweet papa. If you will permit me, I would rather invite myself to the dwelling of my uncle Dick. There I shall be under reverend care and tutelage, and do my devoir in visiting you humbly at your hall. But if I were to take up my dwelling with you, my patriarch might say—‘ Son, thou consortest with mine enemies.’ ”

“ Well, well, be it as you please, Harry,” replied Sir John, not in the least offended.

"It is an old saying, that few men know their real friends. In your father's case, I am sure he does not know his real enemies."

"With reverence be it spoken," replied Henry Haldimand, "if he *did* know them he might have more difficulty in getting rid of them than of the friends he looks upon as foes. Nevertheless, my papa is a wise man, and knows his own business best. At least so he tells me whenever I venture humbly and deferentially to express a different opinion from his own. But as I can only stay one day, it does not in truth much matter where I lodge."

"Only one day, Harry!" exclaimed Colonel Haldimand. "Why, it was hardly worth coming so far for so short a sojourn."

"Ah, sweet Charles," replied his cousin, in a tone in which feeling and jest were strangely mingled, "you who live all your life amidst kindred affections cannot judge how much pleasure even one day with those we have not seen for years can give

to us poor exiles from the ancestral hearth. But the truth is, I have some business to transact, some thirty miles further on, which may occupy a good deal of time; and after that I must return to London, or my father will think that I am not only dead but buried."

"Business!" exclaimed Colonel Haldimand. "The idea of your transacting business is like that of a race-horse drawing a brewer's dray."

"Even so," replied his cousin; "but if there is no other horse to draw, the race-horse must do it; and at all events I shall look for a welcome at your father's for to-night and to-morrow night: then on again upon my fluttering course, like a swallow that sticks flat against the wall of the parsonage house for a moment, and then skims away no one knows whither. Is not that a pretty simile, sweet Kate?"

CHAPTER XII.

It was Sunday morning ; and Mr. Greenshield set off to walk to church. The wind was blowing freshly and pleasantly down the valley ; and the sweet sound of the Sabbath-bell came rising and falling upon the gusty air as he went along. Well-dressed, erect, and easy in his movements, he seemed a very good-looking man, but, strange to say, appeared somewhat older than in his traveller's or his fisherman's attire. He passed more than one group as he proceeded ; and many of the country people, knowing him by sight, touched their hats to the strange gentleman, and made way for him. He was within a hundred or a

hundred and fifty yards of the church when the gate of the rectory-gardens opened, and Mr. Haldimand came forth in his full canonicals. Behind him was his wife, leaning on the arm of her son; and, walking beside him, though I wot it was a walk in an unusual direction, was gay Harry Haldimand, glittering in the height of fashion.

Suddenly Mr. Greenshield stopped, and, to the surprise of the group just behind him, turned sharply round upon his heel, and walked back again straight towards Haldistow Mere. He relaxed not his pace for a moment till he reached Tom Notbeame's house, and there retiring to his own room, sat down and read till the worthy landlord returned from church. The moment he did so, Mr. Greenshield called him into his room, and a conversation ensued which must have had a very witty spirit, if brevity is the soul of wit.

"Who was that with Mr. Haldimand, Tom?" enquired Mr. Greenshield.

“Young Harry Haldimand, old William’s son,” answered Tom Notbeame.

“Humph !” ejaculated Mr. Greenshield. “Do you know how long he is going to stay ? Does he often stay here long ?”

“Not been here these twenty years,” replied Tom Notbeame. “Shouldn’t have known him, only one of the servants told me. Don’t know how long he stays. He shouldn’t stay long, if I was the parson.”

“You must find out for me, Tom,” said Mr. Greenshield. “I must know, and to-night.”

Tom scratched his head.

“Well, sir, I’ll try,” he answered ; “but I don’t know that I shall succeed.”

Tom Notbeame did try, and did succeed, so far as to learn that Mr. Henry Haldimand would leave Haldistow before Tuesday. On the following morning, by the grey daylight, Mr. Greenshield’s horse was led out of the stable ; and he himself descended to mount it. Both man and beast were full of rest ; for the horse had

not been out for three days ; and Mr. Greenshield's foot had not crossed the threshold since eleven o'clock on the preceding day. They set off at a quick pace, crossed the moor, left the village of Haldistow, the park and the hall on the right, and entered the high road about two miles beyond. There Mr. Greenshield pulled in his rein, and brought his horse to a quiet walk. At the end of about half-an-hour more, a yellow postchaise with long, flat, lanky sides and strange looking perpendicular springs, overtook and passed him just at the top of a hill ; but the next moment, as it was rattling on, a head was thrust out of the window, and a voice called to the postilion.

“ Stop, boy, stop, and let me out.”

Almost at the same time, the door was thrown open, the steps came floundering down, and Harry Haldimand sprang forth upon the road even before the horses could be brought up.

Whether this proceeding did not please

Mr. Greenshield, or whether he was suddenly seized with that sort of frantic desire for a jump and a gallop which sometimes takes possession of old fox-hunters, I cannot pretend to say ; but, there being a five barred gate at hand, a good green meadow beyond, and a piece of common ground farther on, he suddenly turned his horse's head towards the gate, leaped him over it, cantered him across the field, took the fence on the opposite side, and in two or three minutes more was seen skimming along over the common as if there were a whole pack of hounds before him.

All that Harry. Haldimand said on remarking this proceeding was. " Damnation !" and then he got into the post-chaise again and told the boy to drive on.

In the meanwhile Mr. Greenshield had a pleasant ride. He seemed an exceedingly good horseman, though he neither rode like a jockey, nor a soldier, nor a fox-hunter. He sat his horse with ease and grace, though with somewhat of a foreign air.

Away he went like an arrow, seeming to think no more of the casual rencontre when it was once over. Nevertheless, he soon abandoned the high road after he had regained it, choosing a narrow lane on the right, and following it till he came to another branch of the public highway on which, at the end of two miles, he came to a small but exceedingly neat little inn situated on a triangle of green turf dotted with elm trees.

There he stopped, and put up his horse, said a word or two to the landlady, with whom he seemed to have some acquaintance, borrowed a fishing-rod and line, and went out to throw a fly in a little river that ran near.

He had named four o'clock for his dinner to be ready ; and now he walked up the stream and down the stream, catching some very tolerable fish till a little past eleven o'clock. Then seating himself under a tree close by the river side, he took a book out of his pocket and whiled away the

sultry hours of noon in reading. Often he looked off the page and gazed upon the water as it ran rippling and glittering by ; and often he meditated deeply—perhaps on what he had been reading, perhaps on the memories which store themselves up so thickly in the breast during the first and middle portions of life ; then, rising with a heavy and somewhat listless sigh, he began to whip the waters once more with not very much success.

The day had become exceedingly hot, though the wind, when one encountered it, was cold ; and the trout did not seem to have much appetite.

A country boy was wending along. Mr Greenshield called to him, told him to carry the fish he had caught to the inn for his dinner, and gave him sixpence for his pains.

“ Ay, they won’t bite now,” said the boy, who seemed to have a turn for angling ; “ but they’ll take famous presently ; for I saw a great cloud as I came over the hill

as black as a slated roof, and much of that shape too ; and when the rain comes down hard, how they do gobble the flies !”

Mr. Greenshield did not wait for the cloud, but went on fishing while the boy trudged away. To say the truth he looked more than once towards the sky, not at all enjoying the thought of being completely wet through with nothing at hand to change his clothes. In short, he determined to beat a retreat before the enemy assailed him, if the voices of all the trout in the stream besought his stay ; and a little after three o'clock he put up his rod and line, and walked quietly back.

“ Lord, sir, the dinner is not ready,” said the landlady, as he entered.

“ Never mind, I will wait,” replied Mr. Greenshield, entering the room prepared for him,

While the good dame proceeded to get dinner as fast as possible, Mr. Greenshield walked to the window and looked out. The sun was still shining with only

the greater splendour because a thick black cloud had crept over nearly one half of the sky. The scene was neither very extensive, nor very beautiful, nor very interesting. There were four old elms, and a horse-trough beneath them ; a sign, almost as ancient as the trees themselves, swinging amongst the branches ; a good broad turnpike road with a cut across it to let the water off just beyond the trees ; a high hill on the left, another not quite so steep on the right, and a bank opposite, which shut out all farther view. The only living objects in the scene were a labourer sitting wiping his brow on the bench, and a stable-boy with a horse which he led to water at the trough. But it was all bright with sunshine ; and it seemed a pleasant little, out-of-the-world nook enough. Mr. Greenshield stood and gazed at it ; but, as he did so, the scene became entirely changed. The cloud crept rapidly over the sun ; the light and the brightness passed away, and the quiet, secluded spot looked cold and

desolate, like a heart whose affections have been concentrated upon few objects when the brightest of them is taken away. Presently the rain began to fall, first with a few drops, slow and heavy, and then with a thick continuous shower, pouring down in long black lines, and filling the air with darkness and mist.

“ Well, I do declare,” cried the hostess, entering the room with pepper, or salt, or bread, or some one of those numerous articles which people at inns bring in one by one, “ you were just in time, sir. What a pour ! I should not wonder if it thundered.” And proceeding to the windows. she closed them ; for the rain was coming into the room.

Mr. Greenshield was still looking out, when down the slope to the right came dashing a barouche with four horses at the utmost speed which two wet postilions could obtain from their wet beasts.

“ Ay, there’s Sir John coming back again,” said the hostess ; and she hurried

out of the room to curtsy to the baronet at the door.

Mr. Greenshield continued at the window ; and as barouches in those days had no glazed fronts to keep out the weather, being a newly invented carriage which had not yet attained perfection, he saw an old gentleman and a young lady getting nearly as wet in the inside as the drivers and servants were on the out ; but whether there was a third person in the carriage or not he could not distinguish. It was a state of things not destined to last long. Down came the barouche at a spanking pace to the bottom of the hill, and dashed over the little piece of flat ground in order to take advantage of the impetus given by the descent to mount the higher rise opposite at a canter. Just when crossing the cut I have mentioned in the road, it gave a bound over the obstruction, and swayed to one side, when away flew a front wheel ; and the carriage came down, not absolutely overturned but nearly so, checking sud-

denly the horses and remaining fixed in the middle of the highway.

For a moment or two Mr. Greenshield seemed to hesitate as to what he should do ; but the next instant he retired from the window, seated himself in a corner, and took up the Newgate Calendar, which lay upon a table at the side of the room. The door was not stout enough to prevent sounds from entering. During the next two moments there was a good deal of bustle and confusion in the inn ; and then was heard the voice of the landlady exclaiming, “ Dear me, Sir John, what a pity ! Why, the axle is broken smack through the middle ! Your worship must be quite drenched I am sure, and Miss Kate as wet as water. Pray walk in here. There’s nobody but a gentleman.”

“ How far off is there a blacksmith, Goodie ? ” asked Sir John Haldimand.

“ Not nearer than the village, Sir John ; and that’s two miles and a half.”

“ Then I am afraid we must have a

chaise," said Sir John, quietly ; "for, allowing an hour for the man to be brought, and two hours to mend the carriage, would keep us longer than I can well stay."

"Now isn't that unfortunate?" cried the landlady. "The chaise was broke all to smash last Wednesday was a week ; and there's not another within ten miles ; and that's at Tripley. Pray walk in, Sir John ; and I'll get you some dry things, ma'am. There's nobody but a gentleman just going to take his dinner."

"Perhaps he may not like so much company at his dinner," said Sir John, with a good-humoured laugh. "However, I must stay somewhere till I can send one of the men to the Hall for another carriage. Have you no other sitting-room, Goodie?"

"None but the tap, sir ; and that's full of smoke," said the hostess ; "but the gentleman, I am sure, will be quite agreeable ;" and without further ceremony she threw open the door.

Mr. Greenshield was quite prepared for

his fate ; for he had heard every word ; and rising as Sir John and Kate entered, he bowed courteously but without speaking. He looked beyond them indeed, as if expecting to see some other figure enter ; and it was evidently a relief to him to perceive that they were accompanied only by the landlady.

“I am afraid we intrude upon you, sir,” said Sir John Haldimand, as he entered ; “but my carriage has met with an accident just before the door ; and we must crave hospitality here for a short time till I send to my house for another vehicle.”

“I trust, Sir John, you will allow me to make it hospitality indeed by partaking of my dinner in the meanwhile,” said Mr. Greenshield, courteously putting a chair for Kate. “I will answer for there being trout enough for the whole party. For the rest of the fare, our hostess must be responsible, as I have had nothing to do with catching the chickens, although I have with catching the fish.”

✱

“ Oh dear, sir, there’s a plenty,” cried the hostess, with a low curtesy, “ if Sir John will condescend.”

“ No great condescension, my good lady, to eat when one is hungry,” said Sir John Haldimand. “ But I really fear,” he continued, turning again to Mr. Greenshield, “ that we are intruding upon you most unwarrantably.”

“ Solitude is not so very valuable to me, Sir John,” replied Mr. Greenshield, with a smile, “ that I cannot dispense with it for a few hours ; and indeed, though I love not crowds, I love society, and look upon myself as a very sociable being, though I cannot drink two bottles of port after dinner, and would not if I could. But I am afraid, while we are ceremonious, your daughter is catching cold. You must be wet I think, Miss Haldimand.”

“ No, indeed,” answered Kate, throwing off a mantle of a peculiar form, which was then fashionable, and which has since made its re-appearance amongst us ; for all things

move in circles, the fashions as well as the planets. " This cloak is thick, and has kept me quite dry."

The matter was then speedily arranged. It was agreed that Sir John Haldimand and Kate should remain and dine with Mr. Greenshield at the little inn ; one of Sir John's postilions was sent off to bring the chariot from Haldistow ; the barouche was moved with some difficulty under the shelter of the elm trees ; and the dinner, with such additions as the good hostess could make in haste, was set upon the table in about twenty minutes.

The whole affair seemed a very simple one, neither very agreeable, nor very much the contrary : the breaking down of a carriage in a wet day, the being forced to wait two or three hours at a very small country inn, and to dine with a stranger in a fishing jacket ; but yet it was a very important and resultful event for Kate Haldimand.

Sir John on his part did not appear in

any degree to recognise his present entertainer as the lodger at the Haldistow Arms ; and indeed he had never seen his face distinctly till that moment. Kate, however, remembered him well ; and as they sat down to their homely dinner she said, with a smile—

“ If I am not much mistaken we are forestalling Mr. Richard Haldimand. I think we are to have the pleasure of meeting you at his house to-morrow ?”

This was a new light to Sir John, who laughed at his own unconsciousness, and then apologised for not having called on his present companion, upon the plea of having been cumbered with company. The conversation then took a general turn, and flowed easily and quietly ; but it dealt with very different subjects from that which had taken place between Mr. Greenshield and the baronet's brother. As if purposely, the former abstained from all classical allusions ; and if he indulged in a quotation at any time, which, being a

habit, he could hardly restrain, it was chosen from some English, French, or Italian poet. But on the whole the conversation was of a grave cast, notwithstanding the presence of a lady. It turned upon education, upon the progress of society, upon different forms of government, and upon the dealings of the rich with the poor ; all subjects of much interest to Sir John Haldimand, and upon which Mr. Greenshield had evidently thought deeply. The latter indeed was like a skilful sword-player who could handle a heavy weapon so easily that it seemed light in his grasp. This in debate is not always an advantage, but in conversation it is a great art ; and the subjects, serious as they were, did not seem dull even to Kate Haldimand.

✱ To people who have any mind—they are few—small things suggest greater ones. The fine trout that were first set on the table soon led to other things.

“ You are a great and skilful fisherman I understand, Mr. Greenshield,” said Sir

John ; “ and however lightly the sport may be looked upon, I am sufficiently a disciple of Cotton and Walton to know that great practice is needful to the attainment of skill.”

“ A disciple of Walton rather than of Cotton, I should think, Sir John,” said Mr. Greenshield. “ The latter, in spite of his many literary merits, was but a poor creature compared with noble old Isaac. Skill is, of course, acquired by practice ; but that which I have was principally attained in my boyish days. I do not bestow much time upon it now, although I cannot altogether think it the waste of time which some persons do. To me it is always a period of thought ; and, unlike other occupations, I am seldom so successful therein as when I am thinking of something else. Perhaps I wasted a little time upon it in my youth ; but I am not sure that it was all lost either.”

“ O, youth must have recreation,” said Sir John Haldimand, “ even to a proverb, my dear sir. The eternal cultivation of

the mind is like overcropping a field. We are sure to exhaust the soil, and lose much for the future in order to gain a little more for the present."

"I am afraid our system of agriculture is very defective as yet," said Mr. Greenshield, with a smile, as he followed Sir John's figure of speech. "A succession of crops is a very good thing, and well that some of them should be very light."

"True," answered Sir John Haldimand; "and I am afraid moreover that there is a great deal of waste land in the realm which might well bear cultivation. It is a strange thing that, in this literary, scientific, energetic land, we have fewer persons who can even read and write than in most other countries."

It must be recollected that he spoke many years ago; and Mr. Greenshield replied, in a musing tone,

"I think that evil will cure itself in time, Sir John; but reading and writing, or in fact any branch of instruction what-

soever, may or may not be beneficial to the individual who receives it, but will be of little benefit through him to society unless it is accompanied by that moral training which will teach him how to use it to the best purposes. It is a subject full of many considerations and some difficulties ; but one thing is clear, that in this country even where we educate the mind, we rarely think of educating the heart."

"That, I think, should be one of the first considerations," said Sir John Haldimand ; "and certainly if any one were entrusted to me for education, I should much prefer filling the heart with high principles, and generous and noble feelings, than cramming the mind with all the accomplishments, or all the learning that ever was given."

It was a small table ; and those who sat at it were somewhat close together. By an impulse that she could not resist, Kate stretched out her hand, and laid it on that of Sir John while her eyes fixed on his

face with a look of tender gratitude and affection. Perhaps Mr. Greenshield did not see the gesture ; for his eyes were bent on the table, and he seemed to have fallen into a fit of absent thought.

The conversation then turned in a different direction, and roamed over a multitude of various subjects. In all, or almost all, Mr. Greenshield seemed to be perfectly at home. From parish law and practical husbandry up to the highest branches of philosophical inquiry, nothing seemed to come amiss to him ; and Sir John Haldimand, who always thought over the characters of those with whom he was brought in contact, asked himself more than once what was the source of the peculiar power and charm in his companion's conversation. He settled it at last that it was thorough good sense kept in continual and watchful activity. Nothing seemed ever lost that had once been obtained. Nothing seemed confused or out of order in the intellectual store-house. Reason ap-

peared to be very powerful ; and he attributed much to its influence ; but he admitted to the fullest extent that man is a mixed being possessing qualities, and even faculties, which reason might be called upon to guide but not to render useless.

Strange to say, he made himself to the full as agreeable to Kate as he did to the baronet. I must pause a moment upon his demeanour towards her, lest there should be any mistake, and the reader should be led to imagine that Mr. Greenshield, an elderly gentleman, had literally, as Tom Notbeame had jestingly insinuated, fallen in love with Sir John Haldimand's adopted daughter, and began to show it. His manner was exceedingly courteous ; and it must be admitted it had a certain degree of gentle tenderness in it ; but there are many various shades in tenderness of manner ; and Kate Haldimand had no difficulty in ranging his according to its class. He spoke to her as an old man to a young girl, assuming rather a fatherly

tone than otherwise ; and the touch of tenderness in it was nothing more than that sort of mingling of melancholy regret for our own youth passed away, with interest in those who are springing forward to run the same course over flowers and thorns, which every right-hearted man, advanced in life, experiences in the presence of youth. He had, moreover, two great charms for woman, especially in her early years. His imagination seemed undimmed, his heart unchilled by the years which had rolled over his head.

Thus then passed the evening, agreeably to all ; and when Sir John Haldimand's carriage arrived, both he and Kate felt as if it had come too soon.

CHAPTER XIII.

WHILE Sir John Haldimand and Kate were thus quietly enjoying themselves at a country inn, Mr. Matthew Hush was as quietly enjoying himself at Haldistow Hall. With his noiseless step he went over almost every part of the house ; he looked here ; he looked there ; he walked along this corridor and that ; and he made himself completely master of the locality if he was not so before. He remarked everything, and had no need of a memorandum book to put down all he saw ; for his mind had a tablet in it expressly reserved for such observations where they were written

in a fine clear hand which admitted no mistake.

Towards half-past four the servants began to be somewhat surprised that Sir John did not return. By this time, however, Mr. Hush was at his post again ; his hours of leisure were over. He was the * butler in full force, arranging the table and the sideboard, sneering quietly at the clumsiness of the footman who assisted him, and replacing with more exact precision all that the other placed wrong. Five o'clock arrived, the hour appointed for dinner, and no Sir John. Mrs. Giles was in a fuss, and the cook still more so. Colonel Haldimand appeared ; but, as if for the express purpose of saving him from uneasiness, one of Sir John's postilions arrived with intelligence of the accident that had occurred, and an immediate demand for the chariot. Charles Haldimand had not offered to accompany Sir John and Kate in escorting Lady Martindale's party a portion of the way home. He had his

own reasons for not liking it ; and he sacrificed the pleasure of a morning in Kate's society, promising himself compensation in the evening. Knowing that he would be a welcome guest, he went up to the Hall, at the dinner hour, uninvited ; but he did not think himself justified in sitting down to his uncle's dinner in his absence, and after having satisfied himself that neither Sir John nor Kate were in any way hurt, he returned to the rectory.

Mr. Hush had now once more the house to himself ; but he always proceeded very systematically. There was nothing desultory or irregular about his plans. Every stray piece of knowledge that came was very acceptable ; but he always followed perseveringly any object he placed before him ; and having set his heart upon winning the confidence of Mrs. Giles, he glided away the instant he had heard the postilion's statement to relieve the anxiety of that lady regarding her master. It was an act of attention which Mrs. Giles

fully appreciated. The dinner was counter-ordered ; the preparations for the meal swept away ; and Mrs. Giles and Mr. Hush once more sat down to tea together. On the preceding day, he had not been successful in his advances. Whether jams and jellies had got mouldy, whether the spearmint water had been spoilt in the distilling, whether the hens had refused to lay as many eggs as they were directed, or whether the cow had kicked over the milkpail, or the cream had turned sour, who shall say ? The anxieties of a housekeeper are innumerable ; each is a source of irritation ; and Mrs. Giles on that day was decidedly in a bad humour. When a housekeeper is in a bad humour, her suspicions and her perspicacity are acuminate in a marvellous degree ; and, well aware of this fact, Mr. Hush would not risk anything by indiscreet enquiries.

But now, his intelligence of Sir John's safety plumped out her heart like a dried raisin in a pudding ; and a little piece of

attention on the part of Mr. Hush rendered her still more placable. He had remarked that, putting the tea into the tea-pot, she made use of an ordinary spoon, and when he seated himself on the opposite side of the board, he quietly drew from his pocket a neat little filigree cockle-shell of silver tidily wrapped up in thin paper, and presented it to her as small a gift from London. How he came by it, Heaven only knows ; but Mrs. Giles took it for granted that it was honestly obtained, and appropriated the gift accordingly. She was very condescending and sociable ; and every now and then, Mr. Hush ventured upon a quiet joke.

“ You were a good bit frightened about Sir John, Mrs. Giles,” he said, with a smile. “ Is he so exceedingly punctual that there is cause for alarm if he doesn’t come home at the dinner hour ? ”

“ He is always sure to come or send,” said Mrs. Giles ; “ and if there is a chance of his not returning, he is certain to mention it before he goes. He is an old man

now, Mr. Hush ; and a great deal depends upon his life."

"What, I suppose he has not made his will, then," observed her companion. "That would be a pity ; for then Miss Kate, I suppose, would be badly off ; and a nice young lady she is as ever I saw !"

"O, don't you trouble yourself, Mr. Hush," said the housekeeper, with a slight bridling toss of the head. "She is well taken care of. Sir John's not a man to leave his will unmade. Don't you suppose that."

"O, there's never any knowing," said Mr. Hush, with a shrewd smile. "I'll thank you for a little more sugar, Mrs. Giles. The wisest men sometimes neglect those things or forget them ; and there is no knowing that a will is made till one has seen it."

"But I *have* seen it," exclaimed the housekeeper. "I don't mean to say, sir, that I saw what it contained ; for Sir John

is too wise to talk of his business to servants ; but I was one of those who witnessed the will, several years ago now, when the other will was destroyed and this made."

" He may have destroyed this too," suggested Mr. Hush.

" No he hasn't, sir," said the housekeeper, sharply ; " for he told me only the other day, to remember that it was in the old oak chest with all the other papers."

" Aye, it's safe enough, then," said Mr. Hush, quietly " I am glad to hear that, Mrs. Giles ; for I'm sure any one who sees our young lady and hears her speak, so gentle and so kind, must wish her well."

I am not quite sure that this was altogether affected. As I have never known any perfect character, so have I never known any one so bad, any one whose heart was so scorched and dried up by the fire of passion or of vice as to have no green spot in the desert. However that might be, Mr. Hush sipped his tea quietly for about

five or ten minutes more ; and then, pretending that he had forgotten something which he ought to have done, wished Mrs. Giles good evening and retired to his pantry. Thence he crept forth again in a few minutes, walked into the dining-room, the drawing-room, the library, and Sir John's private study. Undoubtedly he was seeing that everything was in order in expectation of his master's return. But in the private study he stopped for several minutes, and gazed by the fading light upon an object which stood in the corner near one of the windows. It was a large old oak chest, richly carved, and hooped with massy bands of iron. I know not whether Mr. Hush was a connoisseur in wood-carving ; but he certainly examined that box with very great interest and attention. Nay, more, he put his hand in his pocket and pulled out a pencil, as if he were going to draw its picture. He satisfied himself, however, with taking the length and width of the key-hole on his thumb-

nail ; and then he retired to his own bed-room, where he fell into a profound contemplation of various pieces of crooked iron, which he took from one of his boxes. Still he had a lingering affection for that strange-looking old oak chest ; and after a few minutes he returned to it, though by this time it was dark, or very nearly so ; and he carried no candle. He stooped down over it, and felt about the lock, having one of those iron things in his hand all the time. It was a curious old lock, with great steel ornaments all about it, such as had not been manufactured by the hands of man for some centuries before ; but it seemed not to suit the views of Mr. Hush ; for after a moment or two spent in fingering it delicately, he rose, saying, in a low tone, " That won't do," and retired again to his bed-room. Then he lighted a candle, took out a bunch of keys, as numerous as if he had been house-keeper to an ogre, or a locksmith in large practice. He measured several of these

upon his thumb-nail, before he could find one that suited him. When this was accomplished, however, he smeared both sides of the key which he selected thickly over with tallow, which he suffered to cool, and then descended again towards the room which contained the old oak chest. Still he had no light with him ; and suddenly he stopped on the stairs, for he heard a step passing along the passages below. He generally knew the sound of a step, and could tell in an instant, by the foot-fall, to whom it belonged, if he had heard it frequently before ; but he had been too short a time at Haldistow Hall to have learned the foot-falls by heart ; and he waited till it had passed away and all was silent. Then again he descended, approached the old oak chest once more, put the key into the lock very delicately, pressed it hard to the one side and to the other, and then withdrew it ; for turn it would not. Then, with a due regard to cleanliness and neatness, he took a silk

handkerchief from his pocket, and wiped the key-hole of the lock, to insure that no tallow remained to disfigure its quaint face ; after which he glided silently to his room again, shut and locked the door, and examined the key he held in his hand by the light of the candle. Deeply indented in the tallow, appeared a complete pattern of the wards of the lock into which it had been insinuated ; and Mr. Hush sat down, to draw upon a piece of paper a permanent memorial of the curious design produced. He did it as well as if he had been an artist ; and then, after slowly rubbing his hands twice, he wiped the tallow carefully off the key, and replaced it in his trunk, with all the rest of his apparatus, except the candle.

Mr. Hush was evidently highly pleased ; for his curiosity seemed very likely to be gratified by a sight of Sir John Haldimand's will. He knew where it was placed ; and he knew the exact sort of key which would afford him the means of

inspecting it ; but there may be some doubts whether the satisfaction which he felt arose entirely from the prospective gratification of his curiosity. There was a certain degree of pride in it—of vanity, perhaps, I should say. His progress seemed in his own eyes extraordinary, marvellous, almost sublime. “ It is hardly a week,” he thought, “ since I left London ; and I fancy I have got on pretty well.”

There might be, perchance, something beyond the gratification of curiosity in the prospect, something in the satisfaction he felt more comfortable than the self-gratulation of skilful knavery, something more proud than the knowledge of having served his employer well ; for he ended a long and silent cogitation with the half muttered words : “ And then I shall be safe enough, and perhaps have a hold upon your neck, my master, instead of you upon mine.”

While he was thus pondering, the clock

struck seven ; and, knowing that Sir John would not be much longer absent, he descended to his pantry, lest it should be remarked that he sat moping in his room upstairs.

CHAPTER XIV.

“PLEASE, sir, I have brought the chariot,” broke up as pleasant a conversation as Sir John Haldimand and Kate ever enjoyed. Something which Mr. Greenshield had let fall, made them acquainted with the fact that he was about to return to the borders of Haldistow Mere that night ; and Sir John first and Kate afterwards pressed him to take a seat in the chariot.

“Pray do,” said Kate. “You say you are going to ride back ; and it is still raining very hard. There is plenty of room, I can assure you.”

“For nearly twenty years, my dear young lady,” he replied, I have accustomed

myself to be drenched with the rain, and scorched with the sun, and buffeted by the wind. So that a deluge, I believe, would hardly scare me. It is good to accustom oneself to such things ; and there is no more unpleasantness to me in riding twelve or fourteen miles in such a night as this, than in journeying on under a grey and cloudy sky. I would rather have the moonlight and the bright stars above me, true ; but if I am not to have them, it little matters to me whether it be raining or not. It was first a matter of necessity. It is now a matter of habit ; and though, by a foolish concession to custom, I bought a carriage some years ago, and a pair of horses to boot, yet I have rarely if ever set my foot in the vehicle, and have always wished myself out as soon as I was in. We have all our crotchets," he added with a smile ; " and in elderly gentlemen they become very stiff and rusty. I shall have the pleasure at all events of seeing you to-morrow at dinner ; and you will find that I am not

the least the worse for the wetting to-night."

Kate and Sir John bade him an adieu which might almost be called affectionate, and returned to Haldistow. They reached the Hall about half past seven; and in half an hour more Colonel Haldimand was in the drawing-room. They had tea, and talked cheerfully; and Charles and Kate were very happy. I need not, I think, say more on that subject. The very young may divine, the old may remember; and those in the harvest time of life may feel what it was that made them so happy.

After Sir John had taken his tea, he got up and walked into the library. Now the library lay between the drawing-room and his own private study; and there were doors throughout from one room to the other. It is more than probable that he was taking his way to the latter; but he stopped at the library table, set down the candle which he carried, and took up a letter which lay upon a pile of blotting paper.

It is a funny thing, the mind of man, and very difficult to account for some of its freaks. To look at the address of a letter in order to ascertain that it is really intended for ourselves, is a highly commendable custom ; but I have remarked a thousand times, that if a man receives a letter addressed to himself in a hand he does not know, instead of breaking it open at once to ascertain from whom it comes, he pauses longer, studying the handwriting, than upon any other occasion. In fact there is a pleasure in exercising the fancy ; and though he is very anxious all the time to know who the writer is, he pauses, and lets imagination work ere he takes the direct means of ascertaining the fact. Sir John Haldimand looked at the address ; the handwriting was utterly unknown to him ; and he held it to the light for full one minute ere he opened it. As soon as he did open it, however, he seated himself in the easy chair, and with some interest read the following words :

“MY DEARLY BELOVED UNCLE,

“Being the most modest of human creatures, as you must doubtless have perceived, I could not make up my mind to speak to you yesterday upon a matter of some importance ; and indeed had no opportunity even if I had had impudence. I cannot however leave your part of the country and probably England for a long time without giving you one little bit of warning. Now whether you think fit to act upon it or not, or in whatever way you may act, I beseech you not to make a fuss about it, and especially not to let it be known that the warning came from me. I know not what hand my venerated parent may have had in the transaction of which I am about to speak, or whether he have had any hand at all ; but one thing I *do* know, which is, that being a strong-minded man and subject to few weaknesses, he does not easily forgive any one who thwarts his plans. Neither does he, as you must well

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know, take into much consideration blood or kindred, when he is angry. The worst of it, too, is that his anger lasts for a long time. Twenty years to his wrath is but a tea-spoonful of water to a house on fire. Therefore if he has had anything to do with this matter and you let him know the warning came from me, you might as well break the neck of your hopeful nephew.

“But, to come to the point, I saw yesterday at your house and acting in the quality of your butler a personage not unknown to me, named Matthew Hush. I have had the best possible opportunity of becoming acquainted with the character, habits and views of that delicate gentleman, and always imagined that my father kept him upon the same principle on which I hired my own valet, namely, that he was one of the greatest and most serviceable rogues in London. My valet is a rushlight to him, though I chose him out of a hundred for his roguery.

“The sight of Matthew Hush in your

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house raised up every spark of wonder that is left in my nature into a flame ; for when last I saw him before, he was in deep and amicable conference with my angelic papa upon their matters of state ; and I thought that, although William Haldimand Esq. knew perfectly that the said Matthew Hush robbed, pillaged and cheated him—no, he did not cheat him, that is impossible—he would as soon have parted with him as with his right hand. However, knowing him to be a rogue of the very clearest, purest and most unclouded water, seeing him in your house and suspecting much that he is not there for any good, I feel myself bound to let you know what sort of person he is that you may deal with his case as you may be advised. I dare not send this letter by any ordinary course ; for, amongst other faculties possessed by the admirable Matthew, is that of seeing through the outside of all epistles ; and recognition of my hand on the back would be quite sufficient to convey my

communication to the fire in the butler's pantry. I have therefore deviated a little from my direct way to place this in the hands of a good man who taught me to fish when I was a boy, and who has promised—although he does not seem very fond of me now—either to deliver this himself or to insure that it shall reach your hands. I write it at his house, the Haldimand Arms, which is the cause why the paper is neither gilt nor scented.

“ There was one thing more which I would fain have spoken about ; for Haldistow has been full of apparitions to me ; and some fancies—nay, I will not call them fancies, nor doubts either—have been greatly strengthened by seeing twice in this neighbourhood a person who evidently wishes to avoid me. Though each time I got but a glimpse, yet I feel quite sure I am right. However, I have said enough on these matters.

“ As to myself, my dear uncle, I begin to be sadly afraid that a change is about

to come over my habits and disposition. I feel that I cannot look so lightly and philosophically upon all things as I used to do. I fear even that my visit to you in the country has done me harm in this respect ; but, knowing that it is no use to struggle against such impressions, and that when either wine or water has got troubled and muddy, the only way is to let it work itself clear, I have determined to take a long tour on the continent, where everything being in a state of fermentation may be expected to produce either spirit or vinegar before it has done. In truth, my dear uncle, and in sober seriousness, I am tired of the life I have been living. Surrounded by circumstances which I could not control, I had no refuge but levity. Even that, however, gets tiresome ; and I am resolved to break away. Perhaps my own fate and my own mind may get settled by time and absence ; and if not, I shall be no worse than I was before.

“ I have still one journey to make be-

fore I go. I shall have enough left when I reach London to carry me some way on the grand tour. I have no need of a valet, a tutor, an opera dancer, or any other expensive luxury ; and if, when my little stock of money is exhausted, my father does not choose to supply me with more, I can at all events turn fencing master or a dealer in modern antiques.

“ *Vale, vale*, excellent uncle mine. I fear even this letter will make you think me incorrigible, but nevertheless believe me to be

“ Your affectionate nephew,

“ HARRY HALDIMAND.”

After he had read the letter, Sir John mused for several minutes, and then rang the bell. A footman appeared ; for Mr. Hush was otherwise engaged. Sir John asked if Tom Notbeame had been there that night ; and the man at once answered that he had.

“ He brought up four very large trout,

sir," said the man, "and wanted to see you very much. He remained for an hour or more waiting."

"When did he say he would come again?" asked Sir John.

"I did not see him, sir, when he went," replied the footman; "but I dare say some of the other servants know."

"It does not matter," said his master. "Let him be admitted whenever he comes."

Having thus dismissed the servant, he turned to reflect upon the letter again; and we may well note some of his thoughts. His mind first turned to his nephew.

"This lad is better at heart than on the surface," he said to himself. "In this matter he has acted honestly and honorably in giving me a warning which might be of importance. Yet I can take no steps with regard to this fellow, Hush, unless he gives me cause. That would be unfair to the man; and he must have his trial fairly. I may be a little more watchful of his proceedings; but even that is not pleasant.

Nothing so painful as the necessity of being always upon one's guard. What can the boy mean by the hint that his father can have anything to do with the business? William could have no object in sending the man down hither. Rash, petulant and implacable as he is, and without any great scruples as to means too, yet he never does anything without an object; and he could have no motive in this case. He certainly does not seem to have impressed the mind of his son with any great reverence. The most disagreeable trait in the young man, is the levity with which he speaks of his father. Yet some allowance must be made for him too, after all that has happened. I fear William is harsh, very harsh. Who can be the third person he alludes to as connected with these? Well, it does not much matter. The good people must take their own course. The policy of honesty and straightforward dealing is displayed in nothing more than in its constantly frus-

trating the designs of those who do not follow it. I will let matters go on as they may. If master Hush behaves ill, I'll turn him out ; but I cannot spend my time in setting man-traps or watching coppices."

He paused and pondered on this branch of the subject for some minutes more ; and then his mind turned to the situation of his nephew. He fancied that he had perceived the germs of better things in his nature ; that his spirit was not so light and reckless as it appeared, and that his heart was more upright and pure than it seemed. He thought that absence from the scenes in which he had played an idle part, and from the companions who might have misled and injured him, would probably have a beneficial influence. And he ended by saying, " At all events, the poor fellow must not want money."

Without more ado he drew the pen and ink and paper towards him, and wrote a few lines in a bold, quick hand. He never

wrote long letters; for it was his practice to say all he meant as briefly as possible; and he never said anything more.

“Many thanks for your word of warning, my dear Harry,” he wrote. “I will attend to it. Speak more reverently of your father, my good lad. Three things should be sacred from persiflage, your God, your country, and your parents. You satirize yourself when you sneer at any of the three.

“I approve of your intended expedition. You may gain much, if you try to gain, and can lose little, I should think, by absence from London, by the disruption of ties perhaps not very creditable, and certainly not beneficial, and by an acquaintance with new people who may furnish new views. If you were going to the continent, only as a sort of university to finish an education begun in a somewhat corrupt school, I should say, do *not* go; but I gather from your letter that you have different and better objects; and I know that

you may attain them if you have strength and perseverance to pursue them.

“At all events, my dear Harry, do not suffer yourself to be put to inconvenience for want of means. It may not always be convenient to your father to supply you. I live a homely life, considerably within my income; and I have generally a few thousand pounds at command. So confident am I that you would not apply to me without necessity, nor for any purpose that you know I should disapprove, that I have no hesitation in bidding you, should you find yourself in a difficulty, to draw at once upon

“Your affectionate uncle,

“JOHN HALDIMAND.

“Postscriptum:—My bankers shall have orders by the next post. Address any draft there.”

Sir John folded and sealed the letter, and then walked with it into the other room.

“I dare say, Charles,” he said, “you know Harry Haldimand’s haunts. I should like to have this letter given to him without sending it to his father’s house; for William and I have so long ceased all communication with each other that I do not choose to begin it again through the son.”

“I can easily get it done,” replied Colonel Haldimand. “I can send it to my agent in town, and bid him have it delivered at White’s or Brookes’s. I forget which Harry belongs to; but the agent will easily find out.”

Sir John gave him the letter, and then, casting all farther thought of the matter from his mind, spent the rest of the evening in the enjoyment of that calm and quiet sort of happiness which the toilers and strugglers and negotiators of courts and cities cannot know.

CHAPTER XV.

WE must now follow for a while the motions both corporeal and mental of Mr. Matthew Hush. For the second time in his life, something immediately affecting himself had happened, as we have seen, without his knowing anything about it ; and utterly unconscious of the warning which had been given to Sir John Haldimand, he felt quite at his ease, and moved about with a proud consciousness of triumphant success. When he thought fit, he could be a very industrious man ; and that night he proved it to be the fact. The direction in which he chose to exercise his powers was the avocation of a black

smith ; and with a file in one hand and the key which we have seen him employ in the other, he kept filing away during full one half of the night, with the pattern which he had drawn upon paper lying before him. The occupation of his hands, however, did not at all interrupt the operations of his head. He filed and he thought—he thought and he filed—without the least cessation of either process ; and it was not till the clock struck two that he retired to rest.

He possessed a faculty, however, which most great men are endowed with. He could cast all care from his mind and go to sleep in an instant ; and he could wake again at almost any hour which he thought fit to fix upon.

Although so late in seeking repose, he was up on the following morning before six ; and now the hoarded thoughts of the preceding night found vent upon paper in the form of a letter to Mr. William Haldimand. It was a very curious and cautious document, written in a beautiful and almost feminine

hand, in terms of perfect propriety, and pointed with the most scrupulous accuracy.

“Honored and respected sir,” it began ; and then went on, notwithstanding Mr. Haldimand’s expressed opinion of gratitude, to pour forth abundant thanks for all the kindness he had received at his hands. Next came an account of his reception at Haldistow, and his success in obtaining an entrance into the service of Sir John, of whom he spoke as reverently as if the baronet had been looking over his shoulder. Then followed the pith of the letter.

“I may flatter myself, sir,” he said, using the most guarded terms, in order to prevent Mr. Haldimand from thinking that he had any design of entrapping him into too plain speaking in return—“I may flatter myself, sir, that I have succeeded as far as possible in the matters which I had in charge ; but accident has assisted with far more effect than any skill of my own,” (modest creature !) “I overheard a conversation between Lady Martindale and her

son, who have lately been staying here, immediately after her ladyship had held a conference with Sir John, in regard to a proposed marriage between Miss Catherine and the young lord. From that conversation I learned that the young lady will certainly possess the bulk of Sir John's property," (he was not very sincere ; but he had his motives). " This fact has been confirmed to me by Mrs. Giles, the house-keeper here, who is one of the witnesses to Sir John's will. From her also I have learned the exact spot where the will is deposited, and understand that it is the only copy in existence. It would be a matter of the most perfect ease, I imagine, to obtain a sight of the document, so as to ascertain all the particulars ; but, in case it should be thought desirable to use any ulterior means in order to secure a more just transmission of the property, it may be as well to pause for some time, lest the absence of a valuable paper should be remarked by the parties on examination, and

a fresh will prepared to the same effect. These are all matters for your consideration, however. I am, as in duty bound, merely an instrument in your hands, ready to act as I am directed ; and you may trust on my obeying you with the utmost zeal and punctuality.

“ Although you gave me no orders upon the subject, I think you may be pleased to hear something of the young lady herself, who is to inherit the fortune of Sir John. She is rather tall than otherwise, and exceedingly handsome, with very beautiful eyes, dark, but not what are called black. She is quite a lady in her manners, and plays and sings beautifully. I have heard many at the opera not sing near as well. She is so exceedingly kind and gentle to every one, and is much loved by all the servants and the people of the place. Over Sir John himself, she has unbounded influence ; and he treats her in every respect as his daughter.”

Here Matthew Hush paused and rubbed

his hands, with the utmost possible degree of satisfaction, the cause of which shall be explained in a moment or two. He resumed the pen, however, and went on.

“ I have mentioned these facts regarding Miss Haldimand, principally because when Mr. Henry was here the other day, he seemed very much struck with the young lady ; and, perhaps, if a marriage were to take place between them, it might save all other trouble. I do not know, sir, whether Mr. Henry came by your directions ; but he seemed very much surprised at seeing me in his uncle’s service, and said, ‘ What, are you here, you damned rogue ? ’ but did not wait for an answer. His kind remark was not heard by any one else, which was, perhaps, as well ; and he did not seem to take any farther notice of me during the time of his stay, which was very short. Trusting that this will find you in good health,

“ Honored and respected sir,

“ I remain,

“ Your most faithful servant to command,

“ MATTHEW HUSH.”

Now this letter contained almost everything that was likely to irritate and perplex Mr. William Haldimand. The worthy Matthew knew it, and rejoiced.

“It will drive him half mad,” he said, to himself. “How he will splutter at my thanks and gratitude! and then he will not know what to do about the will. He will fancy in a minute that, if he does nothing, the whole property he is hankering after will go away from him; and then he will see that if he tells me to take the will he will put himself in my power—which he won’t like at all, though it is but making us quits. He won’t know how to act; and he’ll curse and swear at me for not acting for him without his orders. A nod may be as good as a wink to a blind horse; but I am none; and that he ought to know. Then he’ll be in a great fright about the young Lord Martindale; for it would not suit him to have Miss Kate married to a nobleman, and the whole property settled. How he does hate her, to be sure! He’d

break her neck if he dared ; and he'll go as wild as a woodman with the description of her beauty, and her kindness, and her being loved, and all that. Then, if he does not know of Master Harry's having been here, the news will drive him half frantic. I wonder what he'll do about the will ! I'll have it whether he orders it or not ; for that will give me some hold upon him ; and I can at any time swear that he told me to take it ; but I would rather have an order under his own hand. I'll take a copy of this at all events. How mad it will make him !”

Nor was Mr. Hush wrong in his conjecture. The effect of his letter upon Mr. William Haldimand was much what he anticipated. It was delivered to him in the morning as he sat at breakfast. The first few lines he read with a smile of contempt. They referred to gratitude. The next paragraph called up an expression of satisfaction in his face ; for it told of successful progress ; but the next caused him

to look anxious and thoughtful ; and laying down the letter, he muttered—

“ This must be stopped—but how ? ”

After a few minutes' thought, he took up the letter again, and read on, commenting to himself with such expressions as—

“ The d—d scoundrel ! Does he think I'll trust him with such a thing ? He'd betray his own soul for a guinea. I must consider of this matter. If the will could be destroyed at the proper moment, all would be safe.”

Then he read further ; and his cheek grew burning hot, as his eye rested upon the description of Kate. He did curse and swear, and give her more bad names than I will put down ; but Master Hush himself did not escape altogether without objurgation for writing to him about her at all ; and when he came to the part referring to his son's visit to Haldistow, he went into a perfect frenzy, swearing he would disinherit him, turn him out of his house, and never see his face again.

Strange and manifold were the sensations which that letter produced ; but his mind rested principally upon one point. With the cunning of a demon, Matthew Hush had suggested to him, in a distinct and tangible manner, an idea which might have been present to his mind previously in a misty and indistinct form, but which he had been ever unwilling to grasp and define. Four or five times he read over the words—

“ In case it should be thought desirable to use any ulterior means in order to secure a more just transmission of the property.”

How was that to be secured ? There was but one way, the abstraction and destruction of the will. To that course the man clearly pointed ; but the perils were very great ; and the greatest of them lay in the necessity of using such an instrument as Matthew Hush himself.

For an instant, as Mr. Haldimand paused and thought, the idea of seeking a recon-

ciliation with his brother, and taking advantage of it for his own purposes, crossed his mind ; but the next instant he struck the table with his hand, and exclaimed—

“No. I will die first!”

He returned to the consideration of the other means before him ; and leaning his head upon his hand, he shut his eyes to exclude everything which might draw his attention from the subject.

“It must be done,” he thought ; “and this fellow must do it ; but I will not commit myself in writing. I will go down part of the way, and send for him to come and see me. I must make him learn to take a hint. He can do so readily enough when he likes it. Suppose he will not ; for he is shrewd, and can be dogged enough. Then I’ll hang him for his pains. He will not hesitate long, I should think, in the choice between a halter and a thousand pounds.”

Just as he came to this conclusion, a carriage rattled up to the door ; and ring-

ing the bell, he gave the servant a quick, sharp order not to admit any one, but to say he was out.

“ ’Tis Mr. Henry, sir,” said the servant.
“ John has just let him in.”

“ Oh,” replied his master, with a sneer upon his lip. “ Pray let me have the benefit of his company.”

The servant had no occasion to convey the request ; for as he opened the door, Henry Haldimand entered, with his usual light and jaunty step.

“ Ah, dearly beloved parent,” he exclaimed, “ I am rejoiced to see you in such a high state of preservation. The air of London seems to keep you as an old woman’s linen drawer keeps apples, almost as fresh as ever. Why, you do not seem much older since I left you.”

“ About a week ago,” said his father, drily.

“ It has seemed an age to me,” said Harry, with a slight laugh. “ Richard, bring me some coffee and some toast.”

“Perhaps a few words I have to say to you may take away your appetite for your breakfast,” said his father, with a cold sneer. “I understand that you have been down to see your excellent uncle, Sir John Haldimand, at Haldistow Hall. Do not reply till you have heard me. Now you know the degree of affection which exists between him and me ; but perhaps you do not know that any one who is *his* friend cannot be *mine*. If my son seeks the house of his father’s enemy, he is no longer a son of mine ; and having made your choice, sir, you must abide by it.”

Harry Haldimand laughed. “Now my sweet papa,” he said, “for a wise man and a great general, you suffer yourself strangely to be misled by false intelligence ; and, knowing a man perfectly well to be a liar and a scoundrel, you place implicit faith in what he tells you to the disparagement of the son of your bosom. Oh, Matthew Hush, Matthew Hush ! The Lord deliver me from Matthew Hush ! I know just as

well as you do that the tidings came from him ; and you trust in them as implicitly as if they were not Matthew's lies but Matthew's gospel. Let me just strip the tale of its ornaments. I have been at Haldistow ; not at Haldistow Hall, but at Haldistow Rectory. You have always been upon friendly terms with my uncle Dick, and rather encouraged my acquaintance with Charles than otherwise—but listen, now listen like a dutiful father. I am sure I have listened to you like a dutiful son. I went down towards Haldistow in order to see my cousin Charles and my uncle Richard—I might wish to catch a glimpse of the lovely Kate whom I have heard you abuse so much—I don't deny it. You know, my dear papa, in all books sons are bound to fall in love with the ladies their fathers hate most. It's quite according to rule and etiquette. Now don't be afraid. I would do anything possible to oblige you in that way, and would willingly fall in love with her to your heart's con-

tent ; but I could not manage it. Well, but hear me out. As I was going, I saw an old castle on the hill called Burg-loft, hired a horse, cantered up, found a party in the ruins, amongst whom were mine uncle, Sir John, my cousin the Colonel, the lovely Kate as aforesaid, and the young Lord Martindale, apparently in a state of inflammation. My uncle Sir John was exceedingly civil, acknowledged me as his nephew, though on my word of honour I never claimed the distinction, and might have passed without notice had not Charles let the cat out of the bag. Well, Sir John asked me to come and stay at the Hall ; but I declined ; telling him, exceedingly civilly, but not the less distinctly, that my amiable papa had a mortal aversion to him from sundry passages in past times which I never pretend to understand—you know the limited range of my capacity—however, you and Lord Chesterfield have taught me that politeness is the first virtue of a gentleman ; and I could not do less in

common civility than make a morning call at Haluistow Hall while I was staying at the Rectory. I did not go to take another peep at Kate's ankles, I can assure you ; for, though they are exceedingly pretty ankles indeed, and the feet quite indescribable, yet they are very likely, I believe, soon to belong to somebody else according to the pleasantest mode that I know of becoming a quadruped—for if a married man be of one flesh and bone with his wife, you see, my admirable parent, he must be a four-footed beast unless he marries the dwarf woman who sews fine-stitch and paints miniatures without either legs or arms. I see you are impatient, and will therefore only add, that the very next day I took myself off that I might be in no danger either of displeasing you or pleasing myself too much."

" Well, sir, your conduct has not been so bad as I imagined," replied his father ; " but let this business be a warning to you, and remember that even such a visit as you

have now made must not be repeated. There must be no communication between you and Sir John Haldimand whatever, or you are no longer my son ; and you had better limit your acquaintance even with Charles Haldimand to the period of his visits to London."

"You shall be obeyed even beyond the letter," replied Harry ; "for it is my intention, with your kind leave and benign benediction, to travel for some months on the continent. My education is not complete, although I have seen Paris and a small court in Germany. Yet the grand tour, my dear papa, the grand tour remains to be completed."

"I have no money to waste upon grand tours," exclaimed Mr. Haldimand.

"Generous parent, no money shall be required for at least six months to come," answered his son. "I have had a run of luck, and can relieve you from the frightful calamity of supplying my extravagances for some time."

I once saw a little boy in a menagerie who seemed to find great pleasure in tickling the whiskers of a tiger. I think it was natural ; and at all events the feelings of Henry Haldimand in presence of his father were very like the boy's. There was an irresistible desire to tease the somewhat savage creature before him, although he every moment expected a paw to be thrust forth to tear him. However, on the present occasion he escaped unhurt. His father, though smarting a good deal at his half concealed sarcasms, consented to the plan he proposed ; and he was soon in the bustle of preparation. When he visited his club on the following day, a letter was put into his hand, which he read in the window with a very varying expression of countenance. Sometimes he smiled ; sometimes his cheek flushed ; and when he ended something very like a tear swam in his eye. On the following day he took his departure for Dover, and commenced his journey with better feelings and resolutions than had

found place in his heart for many a year before. The heart was a good heart, and capacious enough ; but hitherto the house had been badly tenanted.

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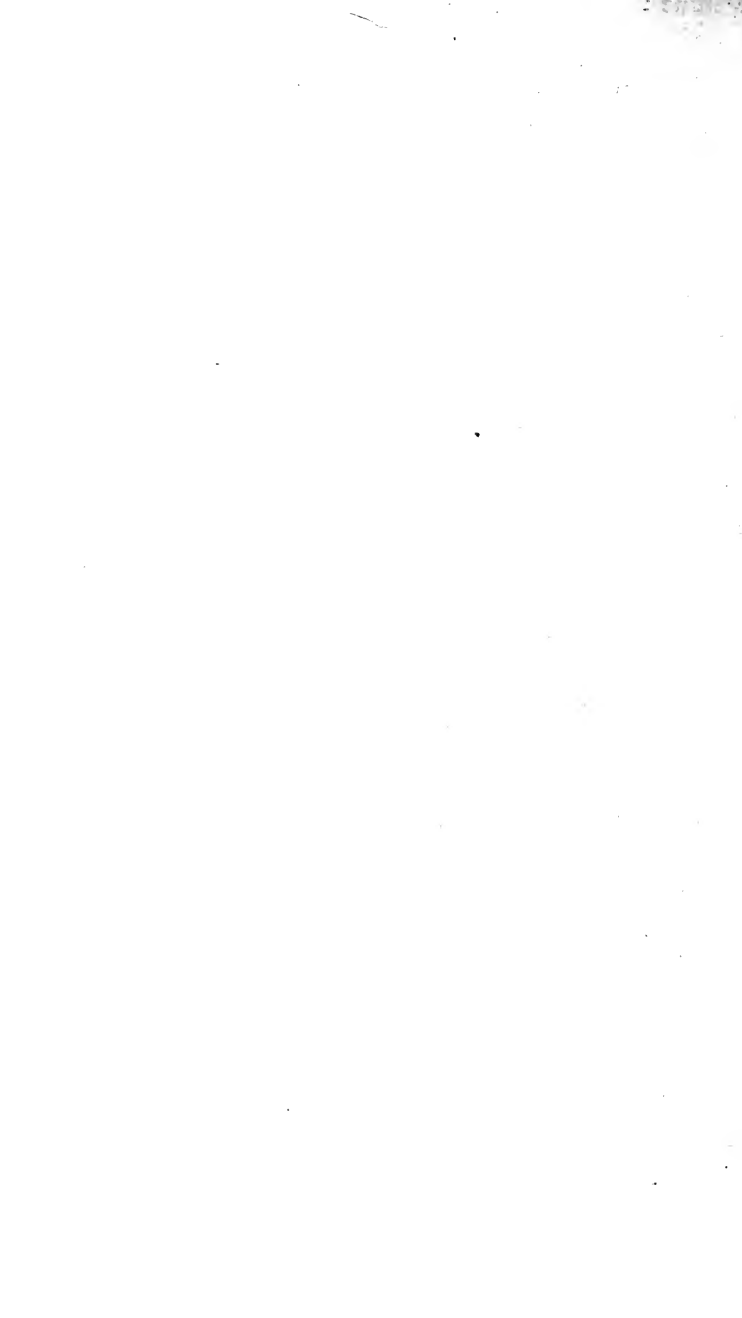
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